



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



WEDNESDAY — 5 OCT 2022

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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	10/05 Russia's private army of mercenaries
SOURCE	https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2022-10-05/in-the-ukraine-war-a-shadowy-key-player-emerges-russias-private-army
GIST	BERLIN — As Russia suffers one devastating military setback after another in Ukraine, a key player in the conflict is stepping out of the shadows: the private army known as the Wagner Group.

Despite the Kremlin's longtime practice of publicly distancing itself from the paramilitary organization, Wagner mercenaries — who first emerged during Russia's [2014 conquest of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula](#) — have taken part in some of the most consequential battles of the [7-month-old](#) war, according to Western military analysts.

Now, at a [potentially fateful juncture](#) in the fighting, experts say Russia is likely to become even more dependent on the private army, which has been implicated in [human rights abuses](#) in Ukraine as well as other conflict zones, including Syria, Libya, Mali and Central African Republic.

“The more dire the situation gets for the regular [Russian] army, the more it will be required to lean on private mercenaries like the Wagner Group,” said Christopher Faulkner, an assistant professor at the U.S. Naval War College.

As finger-pointing has intensified over recent battlefield losses in Ukraine's south and east, the group's self-declared chieftain, oligarch Yevgeny Prigozhin, has become increasingly virulent in his criticism of the Russian war effort.

“Send all these bastards to the front, barefoot and with machine guns,” a Wagner-linked Telegram channel quoted him as saying in an apparent reference to the senior military leadership.

Prigozhin, who only last month publicly claimed to be the head of what is formally called PMC Wagner, for private military company, unleashed his critique after [Russian forces fled or were wiped out](#) in the eastern Ukrainian city of Lyman, a key operations hub.

The city was recaptured last week by Ukrainian troops a day after Putin declared the province in which it is located to be part of Russia — an annexation that most of the outside world, and of course Ukraine, rejected as illegal. Russia's most hawkish commentators, who champion the war on Telegram channels and state television, reacted with fury to the loss of Lyman, but 61-year-old Prigozhin went further than most.

It was a pugnacity that analysts said could help establish him as a political threat to Vladimir Putin despite his professed fealty to the Russian president.

Prigozhin's comments came on the heels of another eye-catching recent episode: the surfacing in September of video, widely shared online, which showed him at a Russian state-run prison recruiting inmates to fight in Ukraine.

Previously, convicted rapists and murderers were not accepted as volunteers, but according to the group Russia Behind Bars, which works to support prisoners' families, Wagner is throwing open its doors to anyone willing to risk service on the front lines, no matter their crimes.

In addition to undermining Kremlin denials that Wagner's operations are officially sanctioned, Prigozhin's prison performance was a powerful appeal to those who venerate strongman-style leadership and may be disenchanted with Putin.

Abbas Gallyamov, a political analyst and former speechwriter for Putin, wrote on Telegram that Prigozhin is clearly positioning himself to appeal to those “disappointed with the current government.” Christo Grozev, of the investigative group Bellingcat, said that in the eyes of Prigozhin's followers, his stature has grown even as the president's is diminished by wartime failures.

“Wagnerites tell me they'd vote for him over Putin any time, and it seems to me he smells blood,” Grozev wrote on Twitter last month.

In past conflicts, the deliberate ambiguity of Wagner's relationship with the Putin government worked to Moscow's benefit, said Tracey German, a professor of conflict and security at King's College London.

"The advantages of a group like Wagner are obvious," she said. "On the one hand, they can use the unit to exert military influence in various places around the world. At the same time, the Kremlin can always say that it has nothing to do with the group."

Wagner is not the only paramilitary group that is operating in a legal gray zone in Ukraine. Another, called Redut, allegedly has close links to the Russian forces and the Ministry of Defense. According to the Russian-language news portal Meduza, a detachment of Redut mercenaries in the Donbas region carried out reconnaissance that laid the groundwork for the push into Ukraine in the morning hours of Feb. 24.

[Putin's highly unpopular military call-up](#) of 300,000 Russian men, announced last month, does not negate the need for firepower that Wagner can provide, analysts said.

"I don't think that this is mutually exclusive," said Faulkner, of the Naval War College, who was voicing personal views rather than citing a Pentagon assessment. "Russia will still use groups like Wagner, even if they increase their formal mobilization."

If anything, analysts said, deploying reluctant or hapless draftees to the front lines is likely to exacerbate the regular army's severe problems with morale, training and equipment. But while Wagner mercenaries may be more efficient fighters than regular troops, their numbers are not great enough to be a game-changer militarily, according to experts.

"Wagner forces are highly unlikely to be sufficient to make a significant difference in the trajectory of the war," British military intelligence said in an assessment back in July. But it pointed out that the group had probably played an important role in summertime Russian advances in the Donbas, the eastern industrial heartland — gains that are now being partially rolled back by Ukraine.

Wagner, however, has shared some of the disaster-prone tendencies of Russian regular troops. Several thousand of its fighters are thought to have been killed in Ukraine. About 200 of its personnel were in the vanguard of the ultimately failed attempt to capture the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, at the start of the war, Bellingcat's Grozev told British lawmakers in April testimony.

And in one widely publicized incident in August, a pro-Kremlin journalist posted a photograph of an alleged Wagner base in eastern Ukraine in which a street address could be seen. Ukrainian forces subsequently bombed the structure into rubble, though without saying whether the photo enabled them to pinpoint it.

The prison-recruitment drive, human rights activists said, demonstrates Wagner's ruthless quest for fodder at a time when front-line duty has become even more dangerous than it was earlier in the war.

Those who are desperate to escape Russia's brutal penal system have little inkling of the battle conditions they would probably face, said Berlin-based activist Olga Romanova, who founded Russia Behind Bars. Prisons have proved to be fertile recruiting grounds: Romanova said her organization has tracked the cases of approximately 11,000 inmates who joined Wagner, of whom 7,500 are believed to have been deployed to Ukraine.

The paramilitary group promises they will be freed after six months of service, but Romanova said her organization hadn't learned of anyone who was recruited long ago enough to reach that benchmark — if they survived.

The family of one prisoner, Vadim Akimov, tried desperately to dissuade him from joining Wagner. His mother, Svetlana, told the group My Russian Rights that she and his father thought they had convinced

	<p>him not to believe the group’s assurances that he would be doing construction work in Ukraine, but then in August, they abruptly lost contact with him. The prison administration will not tell the family if he agreed to join up.</p> <p>“We want to know where he is, whether he is alive,” the mother said in a video made by the rights group. “In the end, he may have signed the contract.”</p> <p>In the recruitment video, Prigozhin makes it chillingly clear that once inducted into the Wagner ranks, there was no going back.</p> <p>“If you arrive in Ukraine and decide it’s not for you,” he is heard telling prisoners, “we will execute you.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/05 Some Florida schools close indefinitely
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/hurricanes-education-florida-storms-natural-disasters-65729caca143510df40ab8e1ff3d4ba4
GIST	<p>The devastation from Hurricane Ian has left schools shuttered indefinitely in parts of Florida, leaving storm-weary families anxious for word on when and how children can get back to classrooms.</p> <p>As rescue and recovery operations continue in the storm’s aftermath, several school systems in hard-hit counties in southwestern Florida can’t say for sure when they’ll reopen. Some schools are without power and still assessing the damage, as well as the impact on staff members who may have lost homes or can’t return to work.</p> <p>Shuttered schools can worsen the hurricane’s disruption for children. Recovery from natural disasters elsewhere suggests the effects on kids can be lasting, particularly in low-income communities that have a harder time bouncing back.</p> <p>“In a week or two, we’ll have forgotten about Hurricane Ian. But these districts and schools and students will be struggling months and years later,” said Cassandra R. Davis, an assistant professor at the University of North Carolina.</p> <p>In Florida, 68 of 75 school districts are open for in-person instruction, and two more districts are expected to reopen this week, the state Department of Education said Tuesday. Among those still closed is Sarasota, where nearly half of students qualify for free and reduced-price lunch, an indicator of poverty.</p> <p>Abbie Tarr Trembley, a mother of four in Sarasota, said her youngest, a 9-year-old boy, asks each morning when he can go back to school.</p> <p>“Every morning he’s like, ‘Mom, is it a school day? Is it a school day?’” she said. “Every morning, I’m almost in tears.”</p> <p>The hurricane damaged the roof of her house, and the family lost power for three days. She was grateful to be spared worse. But she has begun to worry about the effects on her children and their education. Her son already repeated first grade to help him catch up from the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Online learning recently has been an option for schools dealing with disasters from the coronavirus pandemic to hurricanes, but researchers have said overreliance on remote education is not sustainable.</p> <p>Davis has studied how Hurricane Matthew in 2016 and Hurricane Florence in 2018 impacted student learning in the southeastern U.S. She said research shows elementary students continued to fall behind academically, as much as two years after a storm. But districts where parents are affluent and school budgets are healthy tend to recover more quickly.</p>

Sarasota County school officials say they hope to reopen schools for some of their 45,000 students on Monday. School leaders are aiming to reopen buildings in the northern part of the county, which suffered less damage compared to the schools in the south.

In the meantime, students can use online resources if they have access to the internet, Sarasota school officials said at a news conference. Florida's education department did not respond to questions about its guidance to local school systems for addressing the missed school days.

Sarasota workers are ripping out and replacing carpets and drywall where water breached school buildings and discarding spoiled cafeteria food that went unrefrigerated in the days without electricity. For now, school officials said, standing water makes some streets unsafe for students and families to navigate. School leaders are also assessing which teachers and other staff won't be able to return to work when schools reopen.

Two schools in the county have served as shelters for displaced residents and will close on Friday to give workers time to clean them before reopening Monday.

Schools in the southern part of the county will take "at least another week to reopen," Superintendent Brennan Asplen told reporters Tuesday.

Trembley has heard rumors that when schools do start back up, it will be online. She hopes that is not the case. "There's no way that I can assist a 9-year-old with schoolwork and continue my job," said Trembley, who works at a general contractor's office.

After Hurricane Katrina in 2005, some students faced displacement for a long time, [up to five to six months](#) until they were resettled, according to a study. There was a drop in test scores in that first year. "Not only do they have to move their home, but they're even out of school for some time," explained Bruce Sacerdote, a economist at Dartmouth College.

Sacerdote compared regions that are harder hit by Ian to a "mini-Katrina" and said students in the places where the hurricane did the most damage will likely see severe effects in the first year, especially if they are fully displaced and must move to another town or state.

"COVID was also a really severe disruption and [imposed learning losses](#) on these kids already," he said. "It's a double whammy for a lot of these kids."

"Remote (learning) is better than nothing," he said, "but it's nowhere near as good as in person."

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HEADLINE	10/04 State Dept. issues foreign travel advisories
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/news/2022/10/04/state-department-travel-advisory-violence/8179510001/
GIST	<p>U.S. citizens planning to go on an international trip may want to take the time to check online as the State Department issued new Travel Advisories for Italy, France, Belize and other countries on Tuesday.</p> <p>In total, 81 new Travel Advisories were posted, including four "Level 4" Travel Advisories for Russia, Central African Republic, Burkina Faso and Belarus. This level of advice warns Americans to "not travel" to these places because of "greater likelihood of life-threatening risks."</p> <p>There were 10 new "Level 3" Travel Advisories for people to "reconsider travel" due to "risks to safety and security." These countries include El Salvador, the Cayman Islands, and Colombia.</p> <p>State Department recommends to 'exercise increased caution'</p> <p>Twenty-five countries also received a "Level 2" Travel Advisories telling travelers to "exercise increased caution" and to "be aware of heightened risks to safety and security."</p>

► Italy travel warning

Among them was [Italy](#), which has been seeing "increased caution due to terrorism." The State Department said that terrorists could attack high-profile public events like sporting events, clubs, public transportation systems and other public areas. The agency also said that those behind the attacks are using "less sophisticated methods" such as knives, firearms and vehicles to hurt crowds.

There is also a "moderate rate of crime" in Italy for U.S. citizens, specifically for theft and economic crimes, not so much violent crimes. These types of crimes include not validating metro tickets properly and being fined or buying counterfeit goods.

People traveling to Italy should be aware of their surroundings when in public or crowded places and monitor the local media for breaking events.

► France travel warning

[France](#) was another country issued with a "Level 2" Travel Advisory due to terrorism and civil unrest. The State Department warns that, like in Italy, terrorist attacks can happen with little to no warning in popular tourist locations. French police and military are patrolling public spaces, so U.S. citizens should be prepared to go through security inspections at public venues and other businesses.

Thousands of people have recently taken to the streets in Paris to [protest](#) Iranian leadership after the death of [Mahsa Amini](#), a 22-year-old Iranian woman who died while detained by Iran's morality police for not properly wearing her hijab on Sept. 16. Police responded to the demonstrations with water cannons, [rubber bullets](#) and tear gas.

With these demonstrations expected to only continue for the next few weeks, the State Department warns people to avoid travel to Paris and other major French cities.

► Belize travel warning

[Belize](#) was also issued a "Level 2" Travel Advisory by the agency due to increased crime, like armed robberies and sexual assault, especially in the south side of Belize City and other remote areas along the country's borders. These crimes are mostly gang-related and even take place during daylight hours and in popular tourist areas.

"Local police lack the resources and training to respond effectively to serious criminal incidents," the agency wrote. "Most crimes remain unresolved and unprosecuted."

Tourists are often targeted by criminals at resorts and roads, and crimes can range from the more violent to pick-pocketing or extortion.

San Pedro is one of the areas where there is thought to be a credit card fraud ring, so tourists should be careful of cash and credit card theft while there.

[Victims of overseas crimes](#) should report what happened to the local police and then contact the U.S. Embassy who can help assist the local authorities. As a reminder, the U.S. Embassy is not a law enforcement agency.

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HEADLINE	10/05 Slowdown in global trade: recession?
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/sharp-slowdown-in-global-trade-points-to-possible-recession-lower-inflation-11664964002?mod=hp_lead_pos3
GIST	World trade in goods is set to slow more sharply than previously expected next year, possibly easing inflationary pressures but raising the risk of a global recession, a new forecast shows.

With the surge in energy costs and [rising interest rates](#) weakening household demand, exports and imports should increase by just 1% in 2023, down from a previous forecast of 3.4%, the World Trade Organization said Wednesday.

A slowdown in trade flows driven by weakening demand could help bring down price pressures by unblocking supply chains and reducing transport costs. It also means there is an increased risk that the global economy will contract.

“The global economy faces a multi-pronged crisis,” said Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, secretary-general of the WTO, the Geneva-based body responsible for enforcing the rules that govern global trade. “The picture for 2023 has darkened considerably.”

Several long-term trends have weighed on international trade, including de-globalization—a reversal of decades of ever-closer economic integration that accelerated during the Covid-19 pandemic—and, more recently, geopolitical tensions.

Yet measures of global trade flows have been volatile over recent months, partly because of a cycle of [Covid-19 lockdowns and reopenings](#) in China that have affected the availability of goods for transport to consumers. The WTO said trade flows should rise 3.5% this year, faster than the 3% previously forecast but down sharply from 9.7% in 2021.

According to a survey of purchasing managers at factories around the world released Monday, new export orders fell in September at the fastest pace since June 2020, when the pandemic had closed large parts of the global economy.

“This is very sobering news,” said Anabel Gonzalez, the WTO’s deputy director-general.

In a positive sign for the world economy, the slowdown in trade flows looks like it is leading to a decline in freight charges that should help cool global inflation rates.

During the surge in trade volumes that began in late 2020 and stretched through last year, ports became congested and freight charges soared, fueling inflation. Many of those blockages are now easing. A measure of supply-chain pressures compiled by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York has fallen each month since April and through August while [freight costs have declined](#) rapidly over recent months.

“A key factor behind this is likely to have been easing goods demand,” wrote Kiki Sondh, an economist at Oxford Economics, in a note to clients. “While this partly reflects a rotation of demand from goods back to services, the sharp deterioration in the global economic outlook has also clearly played a role, meaning that the drop in shipping rates is not quite as good news as it initially seems.”

There are signs that global inflation rates may have peaked, with the exception of Europe, where natural-gas shortages caused by [Russia’s invasion of Ukraine](#) continue to push prices higher. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development on Tuesday said the annual rate of inflation across the Group of 20 largest economies was unchanged at 9.2% for the third straight month in August.

Prices charged by companies at the factory gate in most of Asia declined in September for the first time since the middle of 2020, according to purchasing managers indexes for the region, another sign that a trade slowdown might bring some relief on inflation, said Fred Neumann, chief Asia economist at HSBC in Hong Kong.

“Central bankers will probably interpret it as a silver lining, and so will consumers,” he said.

Signs of a slowdown in global trade are especially visible in Asia, where data from bellwether exporters such as South Korea show a pullback in overseas sales, as Western consumers, especially in Europe, feel the squeeze from high inflation and rising interest rates. China’s demand for imports from its neighbors is

	<p>also softening as its economy labors under a severe real-estate squeeze and the government's zero-tolerance approach to Covid-19.</p> <p>South Korea's exports grew an annual 2.8% in September, the weakest performance since October 2020, the country's Trade Ministry said Tuesday. Buoyant sales of petroleum products due to the high price of oil offset dwindling sales of computer chips and mobile phones, data showed. Exports to China tumbled an annual 6.5% and exports to Europe fell 0.7%, though exports to the U.S. rose.</p> <p>In China, the world's second-largest economy, an export boom that propelled its economy through the pandemic is petering out. Export growth slowed sharply in August and a subindex of the country's official purchasing managers index that tracks new export orders fell deeper into contractionary territory in September.</p> <p>Chinese demand for imports is also weak, starving Asian economies of a key destination for finished goods, components and raw materials. Imports grew 0.3% in August compared with a year earlier.</p> <p>China's slowdown has also weakened its demand for goods manufactured in Europe, which were just 0.6% higher in the first seven months of the calendar year than in the same period of 2022. At the same time, Europe's exports to Russia have collapsed in responses to sanctions imposed on the Kremlin following its invasion of Ukraine. But exports to the U.S. have grown rapidly.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 Election leaders battle misinformation
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3662010/state-county-election-leaders-already-battling-against-misinformation-campaigns-ahead-of-midterms/
GIST	<p>With campaign 2022 in full swing, both Washington's Secretary of State and the head of King County elections are trying to assure the public that the election system is secure, while also trying to dispel mis- and disinformation about elections.</p> <p>Both elections officials spoke Tuesday morning at a roundtable on election security held at the King County elections headquarters in Renton. Secretary of State Steve Hobbs and King County Elections Director Julie Wise both mentioned baseless and unproven claims of voter fraud from the 2020 election as one reason why misinformation was prevalent during this year's primary cycle.</p> <p>They also said they suspect that misinformation campaign will impact the general election cycle for the midterms over the coming month.</p> <p>Both Hobbs and Wise said they are trying to get ahead of the game because they're anticipating a lot of misinformation this election cycle.</p> <p>Wise stressed that King County Elections has tabulation equipment and servers where all votes are stored and that system is air-gapped — a term commonly applied to a computer that has never been connected to the internet — and that the system is on a hardwired network and not connected to the internet.</p> <p>Both election officials mentioned that people who question elections have often centered on the tabulating equipment and servers, or using the internet to change votes, or hacking into tabulation machines to do so.</p> <p>The general assurance from Hobbs was that the election system is secure in Washington state and that the process statewide will be transparent and accessible. He said there will be a statewide awareness campaign about election security dubbed the "Vote with Confidence" campaign.</p> <p>Hobbs also said there will be new resources to combat disinformation, such as information security and response systems to protect election infrastructure at state and county levels. There will also be expanded on-site reviews and more cyber protection for all Washington counties.</p>

Hobbs said that Washington's vote-by-mail system has worked for many cycles and even said that in-person voting in other states has often led to voter suppression or simply limited the ability of people to vote. He admitted that criticism this election cycle is inevitable.

"We continue to see levels of disinformation, particularly continued false narratives from the 2020 election. Already this year, we've had three major misinformation campaigns and we've had one cyber threat," said Hobbs.

As the head of King County Elections, Wise emphasized that there is a dedicated information technology team at King County Elections that is certified in cyber security. She also said that all staff undergo cyber security training.

Wise added that systems and emails are monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

"Election security is not an area where you can check a box and be done. We have to be vigilant and on guard every single day as we know that those who wish to undermine our elections don't just try once and then give up," Wise said.

Wise also said that vote-by-mail creates a paper trail for votes by its very nature, dispelling criticism that hard copy trails for votes don't exist. She also stressed that there are dozens of security cameras and personnel on site at King County Elections headquarters, along with physical barriers and secure storage areas for ballots. Web cameras monitor the vote tally so people can watch at any moment as staff member process ballots. Cameras have even been added in recent years and are live at all hours during the counting of votes.

Wise did stress that her office has been deluged with public records requests, many of which are asking for private voter information that cannot be shared. She said that the records requests come each and every month and often question the validity of the process.

Ballots will be sent out in a few weeks. Election Day is a little over a month away on Nov. 8, 2022.

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HEADLINE	10/04 King Co. 'iced out' investigative reporter?
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3661923/dori-king-county-antifa-tactics-block-reporter-covering-proposed-chinatown-international-district-homeless-shelter-expansion/
GIST	<p>With emotions already running high in Seattle's Chinatown-International District over King County's plans to expand an existing shelter into a "megaplex" of homeless, mental health, and addiction services, one of the region's most recognized reporters on these issues was banned from Tuesday morning's media tour of the site.</p> <p>"I've been iced out," former KOMO-TV investigative reporter and now Discovery Institute senior fellow Jonathan Choe told Dori Monson Show listeners just hours after a team from King County Executive Dow Constantine's office blocked his entry to the tour.</p> <p>In audio recorded by Choe at the scene, a male voice that Choe later identified as one of Constantine's top media relations aides can be heard telling the Fix Homelessness initiative reporter, "you're not a member of the media."</p> <p>Instead of allowing Choe to view the site, King County staff members opened umbrellas to block "holes in the fence" so he could neither videotape the site nor record details of the tour.</p> <p>"These are Antifa tactics," Choe said. "This is what we saw in CHOP (Capitol Hill Occupied Protest in 2020) and the heights of the BLM social justice" when protestors objected to coverage they didn't see as favorable.</p>

Despite Choe's attempts to secure a press pass for the tour, Dori told listeners he believes Choe was "ghosted" by Constantine and his staff because he's a "dogged reporter who asks tough questions."

It comes at a time when growing numbers of CID neighbors and business owners are pushing back against King County expansion plans for a north SODO site that already offers 270 shelter beds. The county's goal is to add 150 more beds, make room for recreational vehicles, and create tiny homes and treatment spaces for those with mental health and addiction problems. The expansion is proposed for east of Lumen Field between Fourth and Sixth Avenues South.

During a Sept. 8 rally at CID's Hing Hay Park and a Sept. 20 march to Seattle City Hall, homeless megaplex opponents waved signs asking, "Why us again?"

Some blame an increase in CID crime dating back to the 1987 opening of the 152-bed William Booth Center, "The Jungle" – a cluster of illegal encampments under Interstate 5, and the 75-bed Navigation Center homeless shelter that opened its doors in 2017.

Crime, Dori pointed out, tends to increase around areas hosting homeless shelters and service locations like this one. Restaurants and other businesses in the neighborhood have struggled with increases in property crimes locals blame on drug use in the area.

"The CID is already riddled with crime and they don't want even more," Dori said. "Many (CID neighbors) do not speak English and they feel like they have no voice."

Before his departure from KOMO-TV, Dori said, Choe was the CID's leading local mainstream media contact – a "dogged" go-to reporter for CID neighbors and business leaders. Now that Choe is covering these issues for the media arm of the Discovery Institute, locals still believe he is a reporter they can "trust the most in getting their story out there. Jonathan is marching in the streets with them, at their rallies when nobody else in the media would attend them."

Beyond the CID and topics surrounding crime and homelessness, Dori said, the issue of blocking a reporter from covering a news story should be a concern to everyone.

"We need more coverage of ferocious reporting to hold these public officials accountable," Dori said. "They will do everything they can to freeze us out. They want media they can control."

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HEADLINE	10/04 Ian flooding devastates inland communities
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/10/04/inland-flooding-damage-hurricane-ian-florida/
GIST	<p>WINTER SPRINGS, Fla. — The tidy lawns and palm tree-lined streets of Hacienda Village lie more than 150 miles inland from where Hurricane Ian came barreling ashore near Fort Myers. But on Monday, the neighborhood was lined with sopping sofas and soaked dressers, ruined appliances, sodden rugs and discarded mattresses.</p> <p>Family photo albums sat in the midday sun, in hopes that some memories could be salvaged, while some individual snapshots blew through the streets like tumbleweeds.</p> <p>In this neighborhood, a 20-minute drive north from Orlando, as in numerous other inland communities throughout Florida, Ian and its remnants dumped biblical amounts of rain. The storm caused ponds to swell far beyond their banks and creeks to become rushing rivers. It overwhelmed storm-water and sewage systems, and brought unprecedented flooding to places far from the most visceral scenes of destruction along the coastline.</p>

“Right now, I want to run. I want to turn my back and just run as far away as I can,” said Rose Griebner, 79, as she surveyed the already mildewing interior of the home she shares on La Vista Drive with her 82-year-old husband, Ron.

The couple had recently poured tens of thousands of dollars in renovations into the house they have owned since 2008, installing new floors and cabinets, new counters and bathroom fixtures. But they watched helplessly over the weekend as floodwaters caused by Ian poured through their front door and inundated nearly everything in sight.

“I know on the news, people will show Fort Myers Beach — really terrible, catastrophic — and that’s obviously significant, but this storm had really broad impacts across the state of Florida,” Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) told reporters Monday after he toured flood damage in North Port, which lies inland and north of where Ian came ashore.

“Everyone who lives here will say this is the worst they have ever seen here, by far. Not even close,” DeSantis said.

There as elsewhere, DeSantis said, he saw homes that had been “totally cut off from the world” because of the floodwaters. Some residents still had to canoe to and from their houses. Some roads remained impassable days after Ian had moved on.

“You can hide from the wind. We build structures now in Florida that will withstand wind,” he said, “But when you have this much water, it’s just paralyzing.”

A nearly three-hour drive to the northeast, in Seminole County, Alan Harris has been grappling with the paralyzing effect of that flooding.

“It’s definitely record-breaking. I’ve been in the community over 22 years, and I’ve never seen anything like it,” said Harris, emergency manager for the county, which lies north of Orlando and is home to nearly half a million people.

“When you look at the historical records, there is no history for this,” Harris said of what had unfolded in recent days. “Homes that have never flooded before are flooded. Retention ponds became lakes, golf courses became lakes, and apartment and condo complexes that have never flooded became lakes.”

In addition, Harris said, storm-water systems could not keep up with the deluge, which dropped in excess of a foot of water in some parts of the county — onto ground already saturated by recent rainfall. That downpour, coupled with rising rivers, washed away roads and made bridges impassable — at least 6 bridges remain closed indefinitely until they can be repaired, he said.

All told, nearly 6,000 homes in the county have been damaged, with some homes mired in water up to the owners’ shoulders. Hundreds of residents had to be rescued, many of them with help from the National Guard.

“There was no place to put the water. There is still no place to put the water,” Harris said Monday afternoon. “I was here in 2008 when we broke records for flooding, but this has far surpassed that.”

Across inland Florida, from suburban neighborhoods to retirement communities to rural outposts, similar stories have played out.

Florida’s Division of Emergency Management said Monday that officials were continuing to respond to the impacts of “significant flooding” along the Peace River in DeSoto and Hardee counties. It was there where search-and-rescue crews turned after Ian to help residents trapped in their homes, and where swelling waters collapsed a bridge.

Not far away, flooding from the Myakka River prompted the temporary closure of Interstate 75 — one of Florida’s most critical highways — in both directions. DeSantis referenced the impacts of such closures on Sunday during a visit to the inland farming community of Arcadia, which was hit hard by flooding.

“This is such a big storm that brought so much water, that you’re having basically what’s been a 500-year flood event here in DeSoto County and some of the neighboring counties,” the governor said. He added that in addition to damaging homes, “it’s interrupting transport. It’s interrupting commerce, because some of these roads still aren’t passable.”

Elsewhere, a combination of power outages to lift stations and overburdened storm-water and wastewater systems are making cleanup in the aftermath of Ian particularly nasty.

Officials in central Florida warned residents to avoid standing water and the myriad lakes in the area because of potential fecal contamination. Cars attempted to drive around small geysers of sewage water that broke through the asphalt.

The city of Orlando on Monday asked residents and businesses to refrain from flushing toilets, doing laundry, washing dishes and taking showers as much as possible while workers made emergency repairs to the city’s sewer system, after a break in a main caused “an overflow of sewage in the surrounding lakes and streets.”

“There are literally turds and tampons in the street in front of my house,” Kathy Keily of Winter Park texted a friend group on Friday.

By Monday, much to her relief, Kiely’s home, driveway and garage had been power washed multiple times thanks to the help of her siblings, who converged to help clean up.

Florida might be known for its beautiful beaches, but the state also has thousands of miles of rivers, streams and canals that crisscross inland communities.

“Those systems can quickly be overwhelmed by intense rainfall events,” said Tom Frazer, dean of the College of Marine Science at the University of South Florida. “We have a large part of the state which is not on the coast and will continue to be subject to flood threats moving forward.”

Those threats are only growing, he said, in part because of climate change. Scientists have detailed how warming oceans can fuel more intense storms, and how warmer air holds more moisture, creating conditions for monumental rainfall.

“That’s what we are seeing with these large hurricanes and tropical storm events that are depositing large amounts of rain on the land,” said Frazer, who also serves as executive director of the Florida Flood Hub, a state-backed research consortium aimed at helping communities better forecast, mitigate and adapt to flood risks.

Frazer said that as hundreds of new residents move to Florida each day, the feverish growth also results in shifts to land-use patterns, making it even more important for communities to understand changing flood threats.

“Every day we are changing the way water flows, and the landscape,” he said, and public officials must think more proactively about how to cope with the increasing stresses on infrastructure.

“We’ve designed water conveyance systems based on historical data rather than future problems,” Frazer said. “We’ve engineered them for events that have occurred historically, but the world is going to be different moving forward.”

He credits Florida for investing significant funds into resilience efforts, including money for counties and cities to better understand their vulnerabilities, so that they can better decide where to make future investments.

“Every county needs to assess the threat posed by flooding,” Frazer said, because flooding will continue to be a serious risk even far from the coast. “We know that [storms] are becoming more intense and moving more slowly and depositing more rainfall.”

Long after Ian’s departure, worries of rising water linger, even far from the ocean.

The St. Johns River continued to rise Tuesday along much of its path through Central Florida, including the town of Deland, where the river was already past flood stage.

In the small community of Astor, nearly an hour’s drive inland from Daytona Beach, Amber Harper watched the river keep rising in the days after the storm, eventually breaching sandbags piled at her door and filling the living room with nearly a foot of water. The house, for now, is uninhabitable.

“We will get it fixed,” she said Tuesday, “and back to normal in time.”

Back at the Hacienda Village community in Winter Springs, residents also continued to take stock of the damage, and of the recovery that lay ahead.

Gary and Lillian Ritter, relative newcomers to the neighborhood, evacuated at the insistence of their daughter. They returned to find several inches of water in the house and about 18 inches in their sunroom.

“It broke our hearts,” Lillian said. “But people had it worse than me.”

Nearby, Rose Grieber stood in a back bedroom, where her family had already ripped out the flooring and had fans running, attempting to dry all that had been soaked.

“Believe it or not, it was beautiful,” she said, standing on the plywood subfloor.

She wondered aloud how to begin to salvage what remained, and what it would take to start again.

“Right now,” she said, “it’s just devastating.”

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HEADLINE	10/04 Russia moving nuclear components?
SOURCE	https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20221004-rumors-grow-of-russias-nuclear-weapons-moves
GIST	<p>European news outlets have been reporting that in the past twenty-four hours the Russian military has been moving components related to a nuclear weapon launch closer to the Russia-Ukraine border. The pro-Russian military blog <i>Rybar</i> published a video on Telegram on Sunday which shows a freight train, accompanied by military armored vehicles, which is said to belong to the 12th. Main directorate of the Russian Ministry of Defense. The 12th Directorate is in charge of maintaining Russia’s nuclear weapons.</p> <p>The Italian daily La Repubblica reported Monday that NATO’s High Command has circulated an intelligence brief to the organization’s members alerting them to the movement of the train. The intelligence brief also noted that the Russian nuclear submarine K-329 Belgorod, usually docked at a military port near Murmansk in northern Russia, “has disappeared.” The briefing said that the submarine was probably on its way to the northern island of Novaya Zemlya to conduct tests of its nuclear-armed Poseidon underwater drones.</p> <p>The recent series of military defeats by Russian forces in Ukraine have caused military analysts in the West to worry that Russia was more likely to contemplate the use of nuclear weapons to stave off defeat on the battlefield.</p>

	<p>Some military analysts said that the concerns over the freight train were overblown. They noted that nuclear weapons are typically transported in specially built trucks. The armored vehicles and trucks that <i>Rybar</i> shows are not suitable for transporting of nuclear warheads.</p> <p>The case of the Belgorod is different. It is not uncommon for the submarine, which was only put into service in July, to “disappear” by diving into the depths. Since its launch in the summer, the submarine made several trips north to test its underwater drones.</p> <p>The Poseidon was hailed by President Vladimir Putin four years ago as a “miracle weapon.” In May, Russian state TV showed a test of the Poseidon in the eastern Atlantic, saying that in a “real war,” a swarm of nuclear-armed Poseidon drones will be used to destroy the United Kingdom.</p> <p>The Russian military said that the Poseidon can carry a warhead of several megatons, and that an explosion off the British coast would trigger a tsunami-like tidal wave several hundred meters high which would bury everything in its way.</p> <p>NATO did not officially comment on the train or submarine on Tuesday. A spokesman for the alliance told the ANSA news agency about the Belgorod only: “We do not comment on supposed information leaks or intelligence details.”</p> <p>Fox News, citing an American government official who was not named, reported that Putin’s recent nuclear threats have, so far, not been accompanied by any unusual activities related to the Moscow nuclear arsenal.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/05 Russians fleeing draft find unlikely haven
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/05/world/asia/russians-fleeing-draft-kyrgyzstan-putin.html
GIST	<p>Rents are skyrocketing, luxury hotels and grimy hostels don’t have beds to spare. And on the dusty, sunny streets of Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, bands of young migrants, nearly all men, wander aimlessly, dazed at their world turned upside down — and their hasty, self-imposed exile to a poor, remote country that few could previously place on a map.</p> <p>After leaving often well-paying jobs and families in Moscow and Vladivostok and many places in between, tens of thousands of young Russians — terrified of being dragooned into fighting in Ukraine — are pouring into Central Asia by plane, car and bus.</p> <p>The influx has turned a country long scorned in Russia as a source of cheap labor and backward ways into an unlikely and, for the most part, welcoming haven for Russian men, some poor, many relatively affluent and highly educated — but all united by a desperate desire to escape being caught up in President Vladimir V. Putin’s war in Ukraine.</p> <p>“I look up at the clear sky every day and give thanks that I am here,” said Denis, an events organizer from Moscow who on Friday joined scores of fellow Russians at a bar in Bishkek to rejoice at their escape and trade tips on places to sleep, getting Kyrgyz residency papers and finding work.</p> <p>The gathering last Friday evening, convened to celebrate the start of a new “Russian community,” was one small part of a massive exodus of Russians to Central Asia, Armenia, Georgia, Turkey and a shrinking list of other places still willing take them in during what has become their country’s most concentrated burst of emigration since the 1917 Bolshevik revolution.</p> <p>The outflow began in February, with hundreds of thousands of people leaving after Russia invaded Ukraine, but has accelerated since Sept. 21, when Mr. Putin declared a “partial mobilization” in response to battlefield defeats. In the subsequent four days, the independent Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta reported, 261,000 military-aged men were estimated to have left. Tens of thousands more have fled since.</p>

The chaotic rush for the exit has inverted the usual shape of a wartime refugee crisis: Unlike the millions of Ukrainian women and children who have fled into Poland and other European countries, these Russian men are not running away from an invading army, but from serving in one. Nor do they fit the stereotype of migrants as destitute people trying to escape the developing world.

While Mr. Putin boasted on Friday in the Kremlin that his war had given Russia millions of new citizens grabbed from Ukraine, the conflict is driving his real citizens to despair and flight.

“When it all started we thought it would just affect professional soldiers and their families, but with mobilization, it has touched us all,” said Alexander, a 23-year-old university student from the Russian Far East. Staying in Russia, he added, would mean “either going to prison or into the army.”

At the bar in Bishkek, no one seemed to take seriously Mr. Putin’s latest announcement — that he was annexing four regions of Ukraine, vowing that Ukrainians living there would from now on be “forever” Russian.

“He just lies all the time,” said Yuri, a 36-year-old artist from Siberia. Before embarking on a three-day bus and train journey to Bishkek last week, Yuri ran a small business designing album covers for an American heavy metal band and doing artwork for other foreign clients. He now sleeps on the upper bunk in an overcrowded hostel room shared with 19 other people, many of them Russian.

“At least I feel safe here,” added Yuri, who like most of the Russians interviewed asked that only his first name be published, fearing retribution.

Eldar, 23, a math tutor from Russia’s Sakhalin Island in the Pacific, blamed many Russians for being too apathetic about the war.

“Most people just sit on their sofas and think that if Putin goes things will get even worse,” he said. “I could not be part of this anymore and have to think about my own future,” he added.

That so many Russians took so long to start worrying about the war in Ukraine has infuriated Ukrainians, who have endured seven months of torment and bloodshed. Even now, Russians who fled rarely talk about the war, focusing on their own travails with housing, money and unfamiliar customs.

After decades of being treated as Russia’s poor and desperate country cousins, many Kyrgyz, including the country’s president, Sadyr Japarov, are happy to see the shoe on the other foot.

“This is a very new phenomenon for us,” Mr. Japarov said in an interview. Noting that more than a million Kyrgyz worked in Russia, he added that “their citizens can of course come here and work freely” and had no need to fear being extradited home.

He said he did not know how many Russian draft dodgers had arrived but added that the influx would help his country, even as it jacks up rents and leads some landlords to evict Kyrgyz tenants to make way for Russians willing to pay double, triple or more.

“We don’t see any harm and see lots of benefits,” he said.

In a contrast with Europe’s 2015 migration crisis, involving Syrians, Afghans and others, many of the Russians seeking sanctuary in Kyrgyzstan are highly educated and had good jobs back home, often in tech or culture.

Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian countries have long worried that refugees would pour in from nearby Afghanistan but, said Yan Matusovich, a Russian-born American scholar who is researching migration in Bishkek, “nobody in their wildest dreams ever expected a flood of Russian refugees.”

Fleeing Russians, he added, did not want to be regarded like refugees from developing countries but there were so many of them that international organizations needed to “start thinking about providing a humanitarian response” like those in previous migrant crises.

Some of the migrants have lots of money, but others are not affluent or left in such a hurry that they have little more than the clothes on their backs and depend on the charity of locals.

In Osh, the country’s second city, a Kyrgyz woman, Dinara, posted her telephone number online and offered to host penniless Russians at her home. “I will be happy to help you. No money needed, meals included,” she wrote, though such generosity is wearing thin as more Russians arrive.

The welcome has forced some Russian arrivals to reconsider their country’s self-image as a big-hearted, civilizing force superior to less developed parts of the former Soviet Union.

“It is a vaccination against imperialism to come here and be accepted by the Kyrgyz after the way they have been treated in Moscow, never mind other cities,” said Vasily Sonkin, a 32-year-old Muscovite, referring to the more than 10 percent of Kyrgyzstan’s population working in Russia, mostly in menial jobs, and often subject to prejudice.

What to call the arrivals is still in flux. If Russians don’t see themselves as refugees, they also don’t want to be called draft dodgers and there is no sign of the antiwar fervor that gripped young Americans who fled to Canada during the Vietnam War.

A tiny minority support the war but don’t want to die fighting it. Dmitri, a tech entrepreneur from Sochi, scoffed at protesters but said he had lost faith in Russia’s direction after the Kremlin agreed to a prisoner swap that set free more than 100 members of Ukraine’s Azov Regiment.

“Putin said the goal of this whole thing at the start was to denazify Ukraine, but then he freed all these Nazis,” he said, parroting Russia’s false propaganda line that Azov is composed of fanatical fascists.

He said he was reluctant to leave his wife and daughter behind but saw no point in staying in Russia and risking the draft after vital employees at his company started running away. He can operate his company virtually from Bishkek and, if the war continues, said he would relocate his family.

Many Russian exiles prefer to be seen as “relokanty,” a term that originated in Belarus, a brutal dictatorship whose once thriving tech sector offered employees hope of escape through “relocation” abroad with a foreign company.

Ermeke Myrzabekov, the owner of a Bishkek travel agency and president of Kyrgyzstan’s tourism association, said he had received a flood of requests from companies looking for a place in Central Asia to park Russian male employees. The surge, he added, meant “super profits” for hospitality and airlines but also risked tensions if more Kyrgyz families with children were evicted to make way for Russians.

Hotels in Bishkek and Osh, Mr. Myrzabekov said, were all “100 percent fully booked,” a situation that he expected to continue after Mr. Putin’s bellicose speech on Friday.

“Everyone can see that Putin has gone too far already and can’t step back. Russians will be staying here for a long time,” he predicted.

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HEADLINE	10/05 US aim: turn Taiwan into giant arms depot
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/05/us/politics/taiwan-biden-weapons-china.html
GIST	WASHINGTON — American officials are intensifying efforts to build a giant stockpile of weapons in Taiwan after studying recent naval and air force exercises by the Chinese military around the island, according to current and former officials.

The exercises showed that China would probably [blockade the island](#) as a prelude to any [attempted invasion](#), and Taiwan would have to hold out on its own until the United States or other nations intervened, if they decided to do that, the current and former officials say.

But the effort to transform Taiwan into a weapons depot faces challenges. The United States and its allies have prioritized [sending weapons to Ukraine](#), which is reducing their stockpiles, and arms makers are reluctant to open new production lines without a steady stream of long-term orders.

And it is unclear how China might respond if the United States accelerates shipments of weapons to Taiwan, a democratic, self-governing island that Beijing claims is Chinese territory.

President Biden [said last month](#) that the United States is “not encouraging” Taiwan’s independence, adding, “That’s their decision.” Since 1979, Washington has had a policy of reassuring Beijing that it does not support independence. But China’s foreign minister, Wang Yi, said in a [speech at the Asia Society](#) last month that the United States was undermining that position “by repeated official exchanges and arms sales, including many offensive weapons.”

The People’s Liberation Army of China carried out exercises in August with naval ships and fighter jets in zones close to Taiwan. It also fired ballistic missiles into the waters off Taiwan’s coast, four of which went over the island, according to Japan.

The Chinese military acted after Nancy Pelosi, speaker of the House, [visited Taiwan](#). But even before that, U.S. and Taiwanese officials had been more closely examining the potential for an invasion because Russia’s assault on Ukraine had made [the possibility](#) seem more real, though Chinese leaders [have not explicitly stated a timeline](#) for establishing rule over Taiwan.

The United States would not be able to resupply Taiwan as easily as Ukraine because of the lack of ground routes from neighboring countries. The goal now, officials say, is to ensure that Taiwan has enough arms to defend itself until help arrives. Mr. Biden said last month that U.S. troops would defend Taiwan if China were to carry out an “unprecedented attack” on the island — the fourth time he has [stated that commitment](#) and a shift from a preference for “strategic ambiguity” on Taiwan among U.S. presidents.

“Stockpiling in Taiwan is a very active point of discussion,” said Jacob Stokes, a fellow at the Center for a New American Security who advised Mr. Biden on Asia policy when he was vice president. “And if you have it, how do you harden it and how do you disperse it so Chinese missiles can’t destroy it?”

“The view is we need to lengthen the amount of time Taiwan can hold out on its own,” he added. “That’s how you avoid China picking the low-hanging fruit of its ‘fait accompli’ strategy — that they’ve won the day before we’ve gotten there, that is assuming we intervene.”

U.S. officials increasingly emphasize Taiwan’s need for smaller, mobile weapons that can be lethal against Chinese warships and jets while being able to evade attacks, which is central to so-called asymmetric warfare.

“Shoot-and-scoot” types of armaments are popular with the Ukrainian military, which has used shoulder-fired [Javelin and NLAW antitank guided missiles](#) and Stinger antiaircraft missiles effectively against Russian forces. Recently, the Ukrainians have [pummeled Russian troops](#) with mobile American-made rocket launchers [known as HIMARS](#).

To transform Taiwan into a “porcupine,” an entity bristling with armaments that would be costly to attack, American officials have been trying to [steer Taiwanese counterparts](#) toward ordering more of those weapons and fewer systems for a conventional ground war like M1 Abrams tanks.

Pentagon and State Department officials have also been speaking regularly about these issues since March with American arms companies, including at an industry conference on Taiwan this week in Richmond,

Va. Jedidiah Royal, a Defense Department official, said in a speech there on Monday that the Pentagon was helping Taiwan build out systems for “an island defense against an aggressor with conventional overmatch.”

The Biden administration announced on Sept. 2 that it had approved its [sixth weapons package for Taiwan](#) — a \$1.1 billion sale that includes 60 Harpoon coastal antiship missiles.

In [a recent article](#), James Timbie, a former State Department official, and James O. Ellis Jr., a retired U.S. Navy admiral, said Taiwan needs “a large number of small things” for distributed defense, and that some of Taiwan’s recent purchases from the United States, including Harpoon and Stinger missiles, fit that bill. Taiwan also produces its own deterrent weapons, including minelayer ships, air defense missile systems and antiship cruise missiles.

They said Taiwan needs to shift resources away from “expensive, high-profile conventional systems” that China can easily destroy in an initial attack, though some of those systems, notably F-16 jets, are useful for countering ongoing Chinese fighter jet and ship activities in “gray zone” airspace and waters. The authors also wrote that “the effective defense of Taiwan” will require stockpiling ammunition, fuel and other supplies, as well as strategic reserves of energy and food.

Officials in the administration of [Tsai Ing-wen](#), the president of Taiwan, say they recognize the need to stockpile smaller weapons but point out that there are significant lags between orders and shipments.

“I think we’re moving in a high degree of consensus in terms of our priorities on the asymmetric strategy, but the speed does have to be accelerated,” Bi-khim Hsiao, the de facto Taiwanese ambassador in Washington, said in an interview.

Some American lawmakers have called for faster and more robust deliveries. Some senior senators are trying to push through the proposed [Taiwan Policy Act](#), which would provide \$6.5 billion in security assistance to Taiwan over the next four years and mandate treating the island as if it were a “major non-NATO ally.”

But Jens Stoltenberg, secretary general of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, said in an interview that weapons makers want to see [predictability in orders](#) before committing to building up production. Arms directors from the United States and more than 40 other nations [met last week](#) in Brussels to discuss long-term supply and production issues.

If China decides to establish a naval blockade around Taiwan, American officials would probably study which avenue of resupplying Taiwan — by sea or by air — would offer the least likelihood of bringing Chinese and American ships, aircraft and submarines into direct conflict.

One proposition would involve sending U.S. cargo planes with supplies from bases in Japan and Guam to Taiwan’s east coast. That way, any Chinese fighters trying to shoot them down would have to fly over Taiwan and risk being downed by Taiwanese warplanes.

“The sheer amount of materiel that would likely be needed in case of war is formidable, and getting them through would be difficult, though may be doable,” said Eric Wertheim, a defense consultant and author of “The Naval Institute Guide to Combat Fleets of the World.” “The question is: How much risk is China and the White House willing to take in terms of enforcing or breaking through a blockade, respectively, and can it be sustained?”

China has probably studied the strategic failure of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, he said, and the United States should continue to send the kinds of arms to Taiwan that will make either an amphibious invasion or an attack with long-range weapons much more difficult for China.

“The Chinese naval officers I’ve spoken to in years past have said they fear the humiliation that would result from any kind of failure, and this of course has the effect of them being less likely to take action if

there is an increased risk of failure,” Mr. Wertheim said. “In essence, the success the Ukrainians are having is a message to the Chinese.”

Officials in the Biden administration are trying to gauge what moves would deter China without actually provoking greater military action.

Jessica Chen Weiss, a professor of government at Cornell University who worked on [China policy](#) this past year in the State Department, [wrote on Twitter](#) that Mr. Biden’s recent remarks committing U.S. troops to defending Taiwan were “dangerous.” She said in an interview that pursuing the porcupine strategy enhances deterrence but that taking what she deems symbolic steps does not.

“The U.S. has to make clear that the U.S. doesn’t have a strategic interest in having Taiwan being permanently separated from mainland China,” she said.

But other former U.S. officials praise Mr. Biden’s forceful statements, saying greater “strategic clarity” bolsters deterrence.

“President Biden has said now four times that we would defend Taiwan, but each time he says it someone walks it back,” said Harry B. Harris Jr., a retired admiral who served as commander of U.S. Pacific Command and ambassador to South Korea. “And I think that makes us as a nation look weak because who’s running this show? I mean, is it the president or is it his advisers?”

“So maybe we should take him at his word,” Admiral Harris added. “Maybe he is serious about defending Taiwan.”

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HEADLINE	10/04 After storm another costly disaster: mold
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/04/climate/hurricane-ian-mold-home-remediation.html
GIST	<p>On Tuesday morning, six days after Hurricane Ian tore through southwestern Florida, Alvaro “Moe” Zuluaga and his team of mold remediators walked through a house in Naples. The walls were cheerfully painted in sunny yellows and palm greens, and beyond a suspiciously musty smell there was little immediate sign that just days before, the entire home had been sitting in a foot of floodwater.</p> <p>But on closer inspection, the baseboards were swollen. And there was a visible patch of mold in a single shoe.</p> <p>“If you don’t act right away, the mold will cover everything,” he said.</p> <p>In 20 years as a mold remediator in South Florida, Mr. Zuluaga has seen many houses where people didn’t act, and mold choked the houses from top to floor, settling on clothing and bedding and spreading through ductwork.</p> <p>The remediators set to work, packing up wet clothes, the gray linen sofa. By the end of the day, they would knock off all the baseboards, pull up the hardwood flooring and cut out the drywall four feet from the ground.</p> <p>Mold may be one of the most devastating, long-term and hidden costs of America’s increasingly humid, wet and stormy climate.</p> <p>And while the extent of America’s mold problem is difficult to assess, there is consensus that climate change and more intense heat, rainfall and flooding — three key ingredients in a mold outbreak — are heightening the risk. There is relatively little publicly available data around mold rates, although there is robust scientific data that mold poses serious health risks from inhaling spores in the air.</p>

In an acknowledgment of the growing danger, last year the Federal Emergency Management Agency expanded their disaster-aid assistance to cover mold growth. Since the start of the program it has already paid out \$142.9 million to 95,000 households, and that was before Hurricanes Fiona and Ian struck.

Further complicating matters for flooding victims: Only four states and the District of Columbia require licenses and professional training for mold remediators. (Florida is one.) Florida and New York also prohibit mold remediators from both inspecting and then cleaning the same property, to prevent conflicts of interest. In the vast majority of states, though, property owners have fewer regulatory assurances when trying to quickly hire help.

In Florida, hurricanes are a fact of life. So in May, months before it was known that one of the most powerful storms in the recent history of the United States would destroy large parts of his state, Mr. Zuluaga and his team started preparations. They readied portable generators and fuel to power his ample collection of dehumidifiers and fans for drying damp homes when the power is out.

In the first 24 hours after Ian struck, he received 140 calls. One desperate homeowner in Naples called while “sitting on top of their bed surrounded by floodwater,” Mr. Zuluaga said. “It’s been nonstop.”

For mold remediation, immediate action is critical. The moment the waters recede or the rains stop, the clock starts. It can take only 24 hours for mold to take root. By the 72-hour mark, it’s too late. Any saturated porous or semi-porous surface — a bed, the kitchen cabinets — that hasn’t been treated has to go.

Like many residents of Florida, Mr. Zuluaga has seen many hurricanes, and the ghosts of his past storms are “an ever-present memory,” he said. None more so than Hurricane Hugo, the Category 5 storm that in 1989 ripped through several Caribbean islands before making landfall in Charleston, S.C. It ultimately cost \$11 billion, or \$24 billion in today’s currency, making it the costliest hurricane to hit the United States at the time.

Back then, Mr. Zuluaga was a high schooler in Puerto Rico. For three weeks, he and his family were without electricity and running water. “I’m lucky to have experienced it,” he said. “It gives me perspective.”

All homes, even the cleanest ones, have fungal or mold spores. They cling to walls, or float around suspended in the air. What separates a healthy home from a remediation-worthy tearout is moisture, which can cause the spores to feed and grow out of control.

There is robust scientific evidence linking mold with respiratory afflictions including wheezing, throat irritation and worsened asthma. Problems are most likely among children, asthma sufferers or people with long-term exposure to high levels of mold, who may become sensitized to the spores.

It’s an open question in academic research as to whether there is a relationship between mold exposure and neurological damage. “It’s difficult to study because a lot of these symptoms are fairly nonspecific,” said Karen Dannemiller, an associate professor at The Ohio State University whose lab studies indoor air quality.

Her research has found that spores growing in higher moisture conditions can elicit more of an immune response. Mold “is absolutely a huge issue,” she said.

Climate change is contributing to an uptick in the intensity and range of wet weather events and higher humidity, exposing more people to conditions that introduce moisture into buildings, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. After Hurricane Katrina, C.D.C. inspectors found that nearly half of the homes they inspected had visible mold growth. Mold is also the most queried subject to the agency’s National Center for Environmental Health.

In hot, humid regions like Florida, there is always the potential for mold growth, even without a hurricane. But during a storm, if moisture enters a building through a broken door, a leaking window frame or a hole in the roof, and then the power goes out and air-conditioning stops running, “there’s your formula for massive mold growth,” said Doug Hoffman, the executive director of the National Organization for Remediators and Mold Inspectors, a nonprofit trade group.

Florida adopted some of the nation’s more stringent building codes after Hurricane Andrew, including windows that can withstand hurricane-force winds. But many buildings, particularly old homes in certain areas, weren’t built with modern conditions in mind.

After barreling through Florida, Hurricane Ian made landfall again near Charleston, S.C., which has been struck many times by intense storms. Anastasia Zimmerman, an immunologist at the College of Charleston, has survived several of them, including Hurricane Irma in 2017. During that storm, her home flooded and her child developed serious allergies; with her scientific background, she suspected mold.

She took a sledgehammer to the walls, she said, and found mold growing from the floor into the attic. Ultimately, the house was condemned.

“Mold is a hidden tragedy,” she said. “It wouldn’t be acceptable for little kids to breathe chemicals from tailpipes, but we let them sleep in bedrooms with toxic mold behind their walls.”

The problem may be worse for low-income individuals and people of color. Studies have shown that they are more likely to reside in poor quality housing, which can increase the likelihood of suffering the effects of mold. On top of that, tenants may also be hesitant to approach a landlord about issues like mold in their housing if they fear eviction, said Dr. Dannemiller, who works with the Asthma Express Program, a program that conducts home visits for asthma patients.

Mold remediation can be expensive. And insurance, even if you have it, may not help: Mold damage is not typically covered by standard homeowners’ insurers.

Even if you have an additional mold-specific rider, the coverage for mold damage may be capped. In Florida, the limit is \$10,000. And even if you have additional flood insurance, that typically won’t cover mold. (In the Florida counties where residents were told to evacuate, only 18.5 percent of homes had flood insurance coverage.)

In a storm as severe as Ian, the Naples home represents a good case study. The damage to the home was assessed quickly, and the team removed anything that made contact with floodwater. In the next steps, the remediators will sanitize the underlying structure and other surfaces, and the house will be ready for rebuilding.

In a worst cast scenario, however, if a property has been left to sit and the mold has spread through the walls, the house may have to be ripped down to the studs, so that all that is left is a frame.

On Tuesday afternoon Mr. Zuluaga and his team went to inspect a 160,000-square-foot furniture showroom and warehouse. The smell was overpowering. During their walk-through, they found that some of the wooden tabletops and ceiling tiles were already showing signs of visible mold. Everything in the warehouse — an estimated \$5 million of desks, sofas, lamps — would need to go.

Work from Hurricane Ian alone would tie his team up for the next three years, Mr. Zuluaga reckoned. And so, there was no time to waste. Shortly after wrapping up their inspection, he and his team moved on to another home.

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HEADLINE	10/04 IG: DHS released unvaxxed Afghans in US
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/4/dhs-released-unvaccinated-afghans-while-threatenin/

The [Biden administration](#) allowed hundreds of Afghans from last year's airlift to disappear into American communities without getting COVID-19 or other vaccinations, an inspector general has revealed.

The information was released as the [Biden administration](#) was starting the process to fire government workers who didn't get the coronavirus shots — including some employees at Homeland Security, the department that allowed the Afghans to go free.

Investigators couldn't say exactly how many Afghans avoided vaccination. They said the Homeland Security Department reported that fewer than 600 walked away without the shots in the early weeks of the evacuation, but dodgy records made it impossible for the inspector general to evaluate that claim.

Others walked out of military base camps before final clearance — a process that was supposed to ensure they were vaccinated, as well as acclimated to their new homes.

"Some Afghan evacuees independently departed safe havens without completing medical requirements," the inspector general concluded — though again, because of poor records, it was impossible to say how many evaded the vaccines.

The disparity in treatment doesn't sit well with Brandon Judd, president of the National Border Patrol Council.

"Another example of this administration caring more about noncitizens than the actual citizens of this nation," he told The Washington Times. "The White House claims to have put the vaccine mandate in place to protect life, but in the same breath, it turned around and let persons from countries with much higher rates of [illness] into the U.S. to potentially affect all those whom the mandate was supposed to protect.

"When it comes to pandering to activists, nothing that this administration does should surprise anyone," Mr. Judd said.

Homeland Security didn't respond to an inquiry on the different approaches, but it defended its handling of the Afghans by saying they were informed about the medical standards they were expected to meet.

"The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has already provided and will continue to provide counseling for Afghan nationals regarding the conditions of their parole," the department said in a statement.

In its official response to the inspector general's report, the department acknowledged it was taking a lenient approach with the Afghans, including withholding penalties for refusing vaccination.

"To date ... DHS has not revoked parole, nor precluded access to an immigration benefit due solely to noncompliance with medical parole conditions," wrote Jim Crumpacker, the department's liaison to the inspector general.

He said the department should be praised for its speed in trying to get the Afghan arrivals vaccinated.

The airlift kicked into high gear on Aug. 15, when Kabul fell to the Taliban. Ten days later, the government created a vaccine requirement for Afghans brought to the U.S. and began enforcing those conditions on Sept. 7 by requiring new arrivals to go to military bases, where they would be pressured to get the vaccines.

Even at those camps, the evacuees were treated as "guests" and could walk away at any time, the inspector general said.

That made it impossible to calculate exactly how many disappeared into communities without getting the required vaccines.

Indeed, investigators said Homeland Security couldn't even say when some of them walked away.

An official who looked for three evacuees at the camp in New Jersey in January determined that they had disappeared from the base in September without anyone recording their departures. Later, when the official went looking for another person, he couldn't figure out what happened but ended up marking the evacuee as having "departed" the base at some point.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas used his parole powers to clear 77,000 Afghans into the U.S. during the airlift.

The inspector general said 8,600 evacuees never made it to the camps set up to process them at eight military bases in the U.S. Another 11,700 went to the camps but walked off without full processing.

Homeland Security created a task force to try to track down the evacuees who never made it through processing, but even there, the government bungled, the inspector general said. The task force tracked down only Afghans who walked away from Washington Dulles International Airport. It didn't track down the thousands who went to the military base camps but departed without completing their processing.

Homeland Security insisted the task force was fulfilling the exact mission it was given, but the inspector general said the administration's documents showed that the task force was supposed to be tracking down everyone.

At the time of the evacuees' arrival, the U.S. had a near-blanket policy at international airports requiring visitors — those arriving without immigrant visas in hand — to prove they had been vaccinated.

Those who came in on parole, as well as asylum-seekers and refugees, were exempted.

President Biden took office last year vowing a renewed get-tough approach toward the pandemic.

He cajoled Congress into a massive COVID-19 spending bill and rolled out a series of executive policies designed to force masking and social distancing on federal property, as well as vaccine use among personnel with connections to the federal government.

That included a broad mandate on members of the military, one on the broader universe of federal employees, one on medical workers and one on government contractors.

Courts have blocked enforcement of some of those mandates, including the one for the federal workforce that applied to Border Patrol and other Homeland Security employees.

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HEADLINE	10/05 Day 224 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/05/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-223-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed the four laws ratifying the Russian Federation's claimed annexation of the occupied Ukrainian regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson. Russian forces do not fully control any of the four areas, and it remains unclear where Russia is attempting to set its new external border.• Ukraine has made major and rapid advances this week, with President Volodymyr Zelenskiy saying in an address on Tuesday night that "dozens" of towns have been recaptured. Ukrainian forces captured the town of Dudchany on the west bank of the Dnipro

River in their major advance in Kherson region, and in the east, Ukrainian forces were advancing after capturing **Lyman**, the main Russian bastion in the north of Donetsk province.

- **Russia is at risk of losing control of the strategic towns critical to retaining the city of Kherson and eventually Crimea**, western officials have judged, but they warned the fighting along the Dnipro river “will not be an easy rush into constrained territory”.
- **Zelenskiy on Tuesday signed a decree formally declaring the prospect of any Ukrainian talks with Vladimir Putin “impossible”**. The decree formalised comments made by Zelenskiy on Friday after the Russian president proclaimed the four occupied regions of [Ukraine](#) were to become part of Russia.
- Pro-Russian leaders in the occupied regions have claimed that the situation is stabilising this morning. **Denis Pushilin**, installed as governor in Donetsk by Russia has said “the situation on the front line in the **Lyman** direction is stabilising, the defence line is being strengthened”, while **Kirill Stremousov**, part of the occupation administration imposed on **Kherson**, has been quoted saying that Russian forces were “conducting a regrouping in order to gather their strength and deliver a retaliatory blow” in the region, and that “the advance of the armed forces of Ukraine in the Kherson direction has stopped.”
- The **UK ministry of defence** has said in its daily operational briefing that “Ukraine continues to make progress in offensive operations along both the north-eastern and southern fronts. In the north-east, in Kharkiv Oblast, Ukraine has now consolidated a substantial area of territory east of the Oskil River.”
- Russia’s foreign ministry has said the **Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant (ZNPP)** will operate under the supervision of Russian agencies after the annexation declaration. **Rafael Grossi**, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, is expected to visit Moscow in the coming days to discuss the situation at the plant, which has been occupied by Russian forces since the earliest days of the war. **Energoatom**, the Ukrainian state-enterprise that owns the plant, has said it may restart it to ensure safety.
- **Oleksandr Starukh**, Ukraine’s governor of **Zaporizhzhia**, said that overnight “the enemy fired rockets at the regional centre and the outskirts of the city. Infrastructure facilities were destroyed.”
- **Zelenskiy** has posted a series of images of damaged buildings across social media from recently liberated Lyman, with the message “Our Lyman after the occupier. All basics of life have been destroyed here. They are doing so everywhere in the territories they seize. This can be stopped in one way only: liberate Ukraine, life, humanity, law and truth as soon as possible.”
- Russian TV journalist **Marina Ovsyannikova**, famous for staging an on-air protest against Russia’s war in Ukraine, confirmed she had escaped house arrest over further charges of spreading fake news, saying she had no case to answer.
- **Anatoly Antonov**, Russia’s ambassador to the United States, says [Washington’s decision to send more military aid](#) to Ukraine poses a threat to Moscow’s interests and increases the risk of a military clash between Russia and the west.
- **France’s** junior minister for European affairs **Laurence Boone** has clarified the situation in which Russians fleeing the partial mobilisation for the war in Ukraine can obtain visas to stay in France, saying “We have limited conditions under which visas can be given. We will make sure dissident journalists, people who fight the regime, artists and students can still come here, and we will issue visas on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the security risks.”
- **The UN has outlined the “unspeakable suffering and devastation” inflicted on Ukrainians**. Christian Salazar Volkmann, presenting a report on rights in Ukraine to the UN human rights council in Geneva, said “disturbing accounts” were emerging of violations in detention, of both civilians and prisoners of war, while enforced disappearances and arbitrary detention had become “widespread” in territory controlled by Russia and its proxies. There were two documented cases of Ukrainian servicemen having been tortured to death, he said.
- **About 2,000 videos, photographs and audio [files of alleged war crimes](#) have been submitted to the UN mandated international commission of inquiry (UN COI) on Ukraine**. The footage was captured through an app designed to create verifiable evidence.
- **Two women in Russia-annexed Crimea, including Miss Crimea**, have been found guilty of [discrediting the Russian army by singing a patriotic Ukrainian song](#).
- **European Union finance ministers agreed Tuesday to [integrate the EU’s support payments to Ukraine into its 2023 budget](#)** to make payments more structured and predictable.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russia's retreat from Lyman has sparked vociferous criticism of the handling of the war on Russian state television. Vladimir Solovyov, host of a primetime talkshow on state TV channel Russia 1 and one of the Kremlin's biggest cheerleaders, said on air on Sunday: "We need to pull it together, make unpopular, but necessary decisions and act."
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HEADLINE	10/04 Ukraine partisans target collaborators
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/04/ukraine-at-least-18-people-working-for-occupiers-targeted-in-attacks
GIST	<p>At least 18 people working for the Russian occupying authorities in Ukraine have been targeted in attacks allegedly carried out by Ukrainian partisans that have become a key plank of Kyiv's efforts to retake territory.</p> <p>Following Vladimir Putin's attempted annexation of four areas of Ukraine on Friday after sham referendums, the Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak vowed to "continue the systemic liberation of the temporarily occupied territories by military means".</p> <p>He noted that these means included both the regular Ukrainian army and the "intensification of special saboteur operations".</p> <p>"The 'annexation' of [these] territories exists only in Russian virtual TV reality. What will be more painful for the apologists of the 'Russian world' will be [their] meeting with reality and the Ukrainian armed forces," said Podolyak.</p> <p>On Tuesday, after Ukrainian forces broke through Russian lines in Kherson in the south, the Russia-installed leader of the area, Vladimir Saldo, appeared panicked.</p> <p>"It's tense, let's put it that way," Reuters reported Saldo as telling Russian TV. Saldo was rumoured to have been poisoned in August and his death was announced by Russian media, before he reappeared.</p> <p>Ukraine's security services published a list last week of 390 "collaborators" in Zaporizhzhia region alone, who they said would be prosecuted for volunteering to help the Russian electoral commissions. They also published photos of a further four Ukrainians who they said played high-level roles in helping Moscow organise the fake referendums in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.</p> <p>According to Ukrainian legislation on collaboration passed in the spring, individuals who actively collaborate with Russia will be prosecuted to differing degrees depending on their seniority and the nature of their collaboration.</p> <p>But the assassinations of Russian-appointed officials mean that some are facing punishment before they reach the courtroom in the form of extra-judicial killings and life-long injuries. Russian state media and occupying officials have blamed Ukraine for several of the attacks, which they have described as acts of "terrorism".</p> <p>For Ukraine, however, the attacks are seen as justified in a war in which Russian forces are estimated to have killed tens of thousands of Ukrainian civilians and soldiers and forced millions of Ukrainians to flee their homes.</p> <p>On Thursday last week, the spate of attacks, which became an almost weekly occurrence over the summer, continued when another Russian-installed official was targeted in the occupied Zaporizhzhia region. A bomb was strapped to the car of Olena Shapurova, the head of education in the Russian-occupied city of Melitopol, according to the city's mayor-in-exile, Ivan Fedorov.</p>

Fedorov said on Ukrainian TV that the car of Shapurova, whom he described as a leading local collaborator, had been “somewhat burned” in the attack but she had survived. Fedorov said the attack was carried out by Ukrainian resistance forces.

“[Shapurova] headed the ‘department of education’ and helped the occupiers impose Russian ‘education’ methods [in Melitopol],” said Fedorov.

Ukraine says the partisans’ activities are designed to shake the confidence of Russia’s perceived control over the occupied areas and discourage locals from collaborating.

Podolyak told the Washington Post earlier this month that Moscow was finding it difficult to recruit and Russian officials were refusing to travel to Ukraine because of the risks.

“The risks and consequences are extreme – and they understand this very well,” Podolyak said.

It is impossible to verify whether all the attacks have been the work of Ukrainian partisans, and not, for example, infighting among the Russian-installed authorities.

Out of the 18 reported attacks, 12 comprised bombs placed either nearby the assumed target or under cars, indicating the assassins received training in bomb-making. The six remaining attacks on Russian-appointed officials include five shootings and one reported poisoning.

One former Ukrainian MP from Volodymyr Zelenskiy’s party, Oleksiy Kovalov, who assumed the post of deputy head of occupied-Kherson region in July, was shot dead in his home on 28 August. It was the second attempt on Kovalov’s life. In June, a bomb was placed in Kovalov’s car. Russian state media later posted a video of Kovalov from the hospital in which he blamed Ukraine’s security services.

Ukraine has said its partisan forces are an official part of its ministry of defence, formed in 2014 in order to disrupt the enemy if an area fell under occupation, said Serhii Kuzan, head of the Ukrainian Center for Security and Cooperation, a Ukrainian thinktank that specialises in military analysis.

Ukrainian partisans are led and trained by Ukrainian special forces, who are responsible for carrying out the higher-level acts of subversion, said Kuzan.

While thousands joined Ukraine’s version of the home army, hundreds of people also volunteered to be trained as Ukrainian partisans, said Kuzan. Their task was to stay behind during an occupation, build networks of information, launch information campaigns and pass information back to the Ukrainian authorities.

Their work also includes killing high-level political collaborators and the occupying commanders, he added.

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HEADLINE	10/05 Sunshine state retirement turns sour
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/05/hurricane-ian-elderly-seniors-florida
GIST	<p>Joy McCormack had just retired and moved to a mobile park in Fort Myers near the Sanibel Island causeway before Hurricane Ian hit Florida last week. Her entire community was wiped out and her mobile home is still flooded.</p> <p>She had managed to evacuate before Ian arrived with just her car and a few belongings, spending the night in a two-story office building inland. “You don’t expect it to be anything, because we’ve never been hit that hard,” said McCormack.</p> <p>She is far from alone. In a state like Florida – popular with retirees seeking warm weather, cheap property and beautiful beaches – hurricanes hit the elderly hard. According to US census data, 40.5% of residents in</p>

Charlotte county, [33.1%](#) of residents in Collier county and [29.1%](#) of residents in Lee county are age 65 or older, [nearly twice the percentage](#) of the US population. Fema has [cautioned](#) residents to “make informed decisions” about rebuilding in areas hit by natural disasters.

In the days since the neighborhood where McCormack lives has seemed like a war zone. Electricity and internet access in the area are still spotty, [boil water advisories](#) remain in effect in Lee county, gas stations have long lines and information is sparse. She’s still waiting on her pharmacy to open to refill medical prescriptions.

“I can’t get into any of my accounts because of the internet, it’s really hard, you can’t do anything. It’s like living in a war zone,” added McCormack. “I’ve lived here for 20 years and there’s no reason for me to stay in the state of [Florida](#) any longer.” She plans to move up north to be closer to family rather than try to get a new home in the area.

Many other elderly are suffering too.

George Hill, 81, lost his mobile home in North Port, Florida, due to the hurricane, while his two daughters who live in Virginia and Delaware have been trying to [coordinate assistance](#) and make sure he’s safe throughout the storm and the aftermath. They are trying to find him another place to stay, but are unsure whether he will remain in the area or not.

“We’ve never experienced anything like this, so we’re just thanking God he is OK,” said Dawn Hill Anders, Hill’s daughter. “We’re trying to be patient and do what we can right now as far as finding some answers, help raise money and see how long everything is going to take for what needs to be done.”

Hurricanes nearly always hit senior communities particularly hard; a study found Hurricane Irma in 2017 [caused over 400 nursing home resident deaths](#) as the storm cut power supply. [Half of the nearly 1,000 deaths](#) during Hurricane Katrina in 2005 were individuals 75 or older.

Florida officials are facing scrutiny over [delayed evacuation orders](#) ahead of Hurricane Ian’s direct hit in south-west Florida, as the [death toll](#) is continuing to climb as search and rescue efforts in hard-hit coastal areas [continue](#).

There have been [numerous dramatic rescues](#) and narrow escapes of seniors who were stranded as storm surges flooded their neighborhoods.

[Johnny Lauder](#) lives in a low-lying flood zone in Naples, Florida, within a few blocks of his two sons and his 84-year-old mother, an amputee who uses a wheelchair. She refused to go to a shelter, having ridden out previous hurricanes, and he stayed nearby at his son’s house in case something happened.

Then the storm surge came.

“It looked like a river on the side of the house,” said Lauder. “Within a matter of 15 to 20 minutes, it was already up a foot and we had two feet of water on the other side of the glass window.”

His mother’s house began flooding and the water was showing no signs of subsiding, so Lauder decided to brave the flooded streets. By then, cars were submerged, telephone poles were arcing and sparks were shooting off. On his way swimming to his mother’s he found a floating bench to help him maneuver and a life jacket from a boat. He finally made it to his mother’s house but couldn’t get in through the front door.

“When I made it to the back window, I was able to get the back window open and I saw her probably the happiest I’ve ever seen her to see me,” said Lauder.

The water had risen to her chest and she had started showing signs of hypothermia when Lauder reached her. He managed to wrap her in dry blankets and put her on a floatation device to keep her out of the water. He spent the next three hours with her to keep her dry until the storm surge started to subside

	<p>enough for him to move her out of the house, at which point his son arrived and they were able to safely leave.</p> <p>His house and his mother's were severely damaged by the hurricane and flooding, as were most of their possessions and vehicles.</p> <p>"It was just horrifying. Everything is just a total loss," Lauder added. "The amount of water that hit here, there's no way anybody could have prepared for that."</p>
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HEADLINE	10/05 Sudan faces 'generational catastrophe'
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/oct/05/sudan-faces-generational-catastrophe-as-millions-of-children-miss-school
GIST	<p>Nearly every school-age child in Sudan is missing out on education, either completely or facing serious disruption, aid organisations have warned.</p> <p>Schools in some states reopened this week after delays due to severe flooding but millions of children are still unable to go, leaving the country facing a "generational catastrophe".</p> <p>Poverty, a lack of qualified teachers and strikes by teaching staff, the legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic and low vaccination rates are among the many factors that have contributed to the crisis.</p> <p>Flooding and attacks by militias destroyed more than 600 schools during August and September, according to the education ministry. Schools are often just shells of buildings, lacking furniture, running water or toilets.</p> <p>Nearly 7 million of Sudan's children aged between six and 18 – or a third of school-age children – are not in school at all, according to a joint statement by Unicef and Save the Children.</p> <p>The worst-affected state is central Darfur, where 63% of children do not go to school; in West Darfur the figure is 58%; and in eastern Kassala state it is 56%.</p> <p>The education of a further 12 million children "will [be] heavily interrupted by a lack of sufficient teachers, infrastructure and an enabling learning environment to make them reach their full potential", said the statement.</p> <p>Most of those who are in classrooms have fallen behind in their learning; 70% of 10-year-olds at public schools cannot read a simple sentence, according to Unicef.</p> <p>"It's a generational catastrophe," said Owen Watkins, communications chief at Unicef Sudan. "Children are always the future of a country. Investing in them is the right thing to do – and they will contribute hugely to the future GDP of the country.</p> <p>"Children in school is not just about maths, reading and writing," he added. "They also learn social skills ... in a protected environment."</p> <p>Ahmed el-Safi, a teacher and former head of a school in Um-Oshar, in Khartoum's southern outskirts, said that on his street of 20 houses, three to four children in each household were not attending school.</p> <p>"They simply cannot go to school while they are hungry. Many of them have to go to the market to sell plastic bags or anything just to feed themselves," he said.</p> <p>"Despite being a teacher and a head of a school at one point in my life, I found out that my son used to miss classes to go and sell tickets at a cinema in Omdurman. When I asked him, he told me that he could</p>

	<p>not go to school while some essentials are missing in his life. You know they pay us very little, and as teachers we could not feed our children properly.</p> <p>“I could not send my three children to university. They finished high school and helped their little brother to go to university, who studied media, but he never got a job. In the end he became a builder, which doesn’t require any media skills.</p> <p>“Even the ones who go to schools cannot learn anything, as classes are overcrowded with sometimes up to 140 pupils. How can a teacher do his or her job in that environment?”</p> <p>“All the classrooms collapsed in the floods, even our houses collapsed; we are now in tents,” said Mahmoud Ishag, 55, a teacher and a father of 16, who lost his 10-year-old son in the disaster.</p> <p>“Whole villages changed professions. Schoolchildren turned into sellers in the markets and so did the teachers. I now sell onions in the market instead of teaching; some of my children help me but the majority are girls so they cannot work.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 Russia touts rapid mobilization of 200K
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-touts-rapid-mobilization-but-faces-dilemma-as-ukrainians-advance-11664902438?mod=hp_lead_pos6
GIST	<p>Russia’s defense minister said 200,000 men had entered the army as part of a mobilization drive that began last month as the rapid advance of Ukrainian forces into Russian-occupied territories outpaces Moscow’s ability to pour in reinforcements.</p> <p>The suggestion that Russia is already two-thirds of the way toward the target the minister, Sergei Shoigu, announced last month follows criticism of the call-up process—including from Russian President Vladimir Putin. But it raises questions as to whether the depleted Russian military will be able to cope with the sheer numbers of new recruits and use them effectively.</p> <p>Western military analysts say Moscow faces a dilemma. It could rush ill-prepared troops to the front line to try to stem the losses—with likely little effect on the war’s momentum. Or it could wait until next year and send in better trained and equipped troops that could potentially make a difference on the battlefield. But by that time, Ukrainian forces could have secured significant further gains.</p> <p>“It’s not going to help the Russians, at least not this winter, and they may well lose ground before that,” said Lawrence Freedman, professor emeritus of war studies at Kings College London.</p> <p>Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of Ukraine’s National Security and Defense Council, said in an interview that Russia had mobilized 200,000 people so far. “Some of them are already on the front, some have already been captured and some have already been destroyed,” he said.</p> <p>“Mobilized people are already being sent to the front before being outfitted,” he said.</p> <p>Henry Boyd, a research fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, said rushing poorly motivated, trained and equipped forces into combat “is about the worst of all possible worlds.”</p> <p>In the comments, released by Russia’s Defense Ministry, Mr. Shoigu said the new recruits would be trained at 80 training grounds and six training centers.</p> <p>The Defense Ministry also published videos showing mobilized soldiers arriving in Russian-controlled areas of Luhansk to join the fight, and being greeted by gleeful locals urging the men to “liberate” the region and ensure their safety.</p>

On the face of it, 300,000 new soldiers could make a major difference in the war in Ukraine. Russia sent 150,000 troops into Ukraine at the beginning of the war and tens of thousands of troops as reinforcements since then, according to Western estimates.

U.S. estimates suggest [as many as 80,000](#) of the invading force have been killed, injured, or captured—though this likely includes non-Russian army groups such as proxy militias of eastern Ukraine and private military companies. Mr. Shoigu said last month close to 6,000 Russian troops had been killed.

Though evidence from Ukrainian and Russian social-media accounts show that some new recruits have been rushed to the front lines, it isn't clear on what scale that is happening or whether it is being done systematically. A senior U.S. military official said Monday that the newly mobilized forces hadn't moved into Ukraine on a large scale.

Dara Massicot, a senior researcher at Rand Corp., said [the partial mobilization](#)—which Mr. Putin had long resisted—suggested that ad-hoc efforts to enlarge the fighting forces, seeking volunteers and recruiting in prisons, are reaching their end.

She said one possible short-term use of the conscripts would be to bring them into noncombat missions, such as manning checkpoints, to allow more seasoned troops to move toward the front.

But she said some evidence indicated that new troops are being moved into formations that are already exhausted. “Reality is suggesting that they are putting these people directly into these broken units where they will not be a value add and will not contribute to combat capability,” she said.

Mr. Danilov said he understood new battalions would be formed “but for these forces you need time to train them, equip them and they need motivation,” which they don't have. He cited how new units were formed from volunteers in Russia's Third Army Corps this year, and how they retreated during Ukrainian forces' advance in the Kharkiv region earlier this month. “They don't have a chance,” he said.

The effectiveness of Russia's mobilization infrastructure is also in question. Ms. Massicot said the system has been allowed to atrophy for a decade.

“They know they haven't done anything with it in a decade, not really, and to suddenly expect this system to snap to attention and function well is a highly problematic assumption,” she said.

Mr. Boyd of the IISS said Russian efforts since 2008 to modernize the military put greater emphasis on a professional army with contract soldiers rather than draftees.

“What you've got now is the logical consequence of a largely ignored and underfunded mobilization system suddenly being asked to do a lot of very complicated administrative things with a load of local officials who are not necessarily trained or appointed for their capacity to deliver this,” he said.

Analysts said basic training in the Russian military would usually take three to four months, long enough only to obtain rudimentary skills. But many would-be trainers would either have been killed or injured in Ukraine or are still fighting there.

Ms. Massicot said there was “a cascade of missing people in the process because they're fighting in Ukraine, they've been killed in Ukraine.” In some cases, conscripts are likely training conscripts in the field.

Mr. Putin last week acknowledged mistakes in the recruitment process that needed to be corrected, reflecting criticism that non-reservists were being press-ganged into service in places.

In public comments on Monday, British defense intelligence said Mr. Putin's “unusually rapid acknowledgment of problems highlights the dysfunction of the mobilization over its first week,” saying local officials are likely unclear on the scope and legal rationale of the campaign.

	<p>“As drafted reservists continue to assemble at tented transit camps, Russian officials are likely struggling to provide training and in finding officers to lead new units,” it said.</p> <p>With the mobilization so far producing only a trickle of reinforcements to Ukraine, officials loyal to Kyiv say Moscow-installed authorities have begun a covert draft of local residents in Russian-occupied areas as they seek to shore up defenses against advancing Ukrainian forces.</p> <p>“A full-scale mobilization has begun in the city,” Ivan Fyodorov, the exiled Ukrainian mayor of Melitopol in the Zaporizhzhia region, said on Monday. “The goal is to have 3,000 volunteers ready by Oct. 10.” Mr. Fyodorov said residents who refuse to fight must offer up people to take their place, though he didn’t provide evidence to back the claim.</p> <p>Mr. Shoigu also said that Russia’s regular annual conscription would be reduced in size by 7,500 men to 120,000 and delayed by a month until November. “The late start to the cycle is an indication of growing pressures on Russia’s ability to train and equip a large number of new conscripted personnel,” U.K. defense intelligence said Tuesday.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 Seattle’s minimum wage to \$18.69 Jan 1st
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/seattle-minimum-wage-increase-2023/281-e6afefbf-09ba-431c-bd5a-2d7e988ba3c6
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — The minimum wage in Seattle will increase to \$18.69 on Jan. 1, a jump of \$1.42 from the current minimum wage in the city.</p> <p>The Seattle Office of Labor Standards (OLS) made the announcement of the annual wage increase Tuesday morning. The increase is required by the city's Minimum Wage Ordinance and reflects the Consumer Price Index inflation rate for the Seattle-Tacoma-Bremerton area.</p> <p>The minimum wage applies to employees within Seattle city limits, regardless of the employee’s immigration status.</p> <p>Starting Jan. 1, 2023, the OLS and the minimum wage for large employers, which is defined by 501 employees or more, will be \$18.69 per hour, which is an 8.22% increase over 2022.</p> <p>The minimum wage for small employers with less than 500 workers will also be \$18.69 per hour if the employer does not pay at least \$2.19 per hour towards the employee’s medical benefits and/or the employee does not earn at least \$2.19 per hour in tips, according to the OLS.</p> <p>The minimum wage for small employers who do pay at least \$2.19 per hour for the employee’s medical benefits and/or where the employee makes at least \$2.19 per hour in tips will be \$16.50 per hour starting Jan. 1.</p> <p>The OLS said revised workplace posters with updated labor standards information for 2023 will be mailed to all businesses with a Seattle business license. Copies of the poster, which are available in English and 25 other languages, are already available online.</p> <p>The minimum wage for Washington state will also increase to \$15.74 in January. State law ties Washington's minimum wage to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index.</p> <p>The state’s 8.66% rise for 2023 is tied to the cost of common goods, such as housing, food and medical care, according to the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries.</p> <p>The state minimum wage is applicable to workers 16 years and older. Workers between the ages of 14 and 15 can earn 85% of that rate or \$13.38 per hour.</p>

HEADLINE	10/04 Hospitals lose \$1.75B first six months 2022
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/washington-state-hospitals-financial-loss/281-a8d9b980-7448-4dbc-9e3d-c6457dea1207
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Washington state hospitals continue to struggle financially and healthcare leaders say it's impacting patient care.</p> <p>Hospitals across the state lost approximately \$1.75 billion in the first six months of 2022, according to the latest financial survey.</p> <p>The financial outlook is not sustainable, according to the Washington State Hospital Association.</p> <p>"The results are clear and incredibly concerning," Hospital Association CEO Cassie Sauer said. "What we see is that hospitals in Washington state continue to face an unsustainable financial situation."</p> <p>Sauer added, "Our biggest concern here is that it's putting patient care at risk in many communities across the state."</p> <p>Revenue is not keeping up with escalating costs, according to the Hospital Association.</p> <p>The survey shows operating revenue increased by 4% in the first six months of 2022 when compared to 2021. Meanwhile, expenses increased by 11% over the same time period. That, according to the Hospital Association, has to do with everything from labor costs to supplies and medicine.</p> <p>The Hospital Association previously raised concerns about its first-quarter revenue and expenses.</p> <p>The financial problems come at a time when hospitals are reporting increased demand.</p> <p>At the end of September, Seattle Children's reported long wait times for its emergency room, with an unprecedented volume of patients. That, according to the hospital, has to do with children getting sicker from common viruses, as well as local pediatric beds being full in many areas.</p> <p>Harborview Medical Center, too, has dealt with overcrowding recently. The region's only Level 1 trauma center has 413 licensed beds, but in the last eight months, has seen more than 500 patients daily.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 Seattle in fastest housing market cooldown
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/money/markets/real-estate/seattle-housing-market-cooldown-report/281-a842e535-5e57-4d28-bd6f-0d58a9f5fff2
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — For the first time in nearly a decade, Seattle's housing market is in flux. The market cooling off faster than any other city in the country, with home prices selling for 2% less in August than in July, according to a recent Redfin report.</p> <p>High mortgage rates are outpacing how much buyers can afford, which is leading to homes staying on the market for longer and sellers slashing prices.</p> <p>It's something house flipper Diana Roger is seeing, too. Roger has been buying, remodeling and selling homes in the Seattle area for about eight years.</p> <p>"I enjoy finding ways to sort of bring out the best in a home," said Roger.</p>

She said her latest investment, a classic Pacific Northwest split level in Brier with quartz countertops in the kitchen and four bedrooms, would have been sold within five days last year when mortgage rates were often less than 3%.

But since early 2022, the interest rate on a 30-year mortgage loan has surged to nearly 7%.

“[The interest rate] really has an impact on the amount of monthly payments for borrowers to the point of, in some cases, the payments are up more than 50%,” explained Doug Mielitz, vice president of mortgage production at Seattle Bank.

For example, Mielitz pointed to a home priced at \$775,000. Principal and interest payment on a mortgage rate earlier this year would have been around \$3,300. At today's rate, it's around \$4,400.

“An \$1,100 difference is meaningful for most people,” Mielitz said.

"I think I'm experiencing what other homebuyers are, which is the shift in the market and the uncertainty of what's going on, said Roger.

People looking to either increase home space for an expanding family or downsize are no longer able to.

Mielitz said people are asking themselves, "well if we sell our existing home, where are we going to go?"

Roger said within a year she went from getting multiple offers above the asking price before an open house to the Brier home being on the market for five weeks with no offers.

"People are pickier and really looking for value for their money and waiting for a home that is maybe 9/10 or 10/10," explained Roger, who is considering taking the home off the market while hoping rates improve by spring.

Mielitz said three months on the market was normal a decade ago, but it's just not what people are used to now. He encourages people not to shy away from the high rates but to map out how much they are willing to spend monthly on both the high and low ends before seeking a loan.

He also pointed to the [Washington State Housing Finance Commission](#), which [offers free seminars for people](#) to navigate the home buying process.

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HEADLINE	10/04 Weekend: First Lady to visit western WA
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/first-lady-jill-biden-western-washington/281-f02a47da-48f7-4def-bcd7-6bc2dbf56591
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — First Lady Dr. Jill Biden will visit western Washington this weekend.</p> <p>On Friday, Oct. 7 around 4:15 p.m., the first lady will visit Bates Technical College in Tacoma to highlight its workforce development programs. The programs connect current high school and postsecondary students to resources and opportunities.</p> <p>Biden will attend and deliver remarks at a finance event for Senator Patty Murray in Seattle at noon on Saturday, Oct. 8.</p> <p>Then, at 1 p.m. on Saturday, Biden will be at Seattle's Pacific Science Center to attend a Hidden Helpers Coalition event that will celebrate children in military and veteran caregiving families. Senator Patty Murray, and Secretary of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough will host the event with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation and Wounded Warrior Project.</p>

	<p>The event is a part of the White House's Joining Forces initiative that supports military families, which includes: families of service members and veterans, caregivers and survivors.</p> <p>Joining Forces was an initiative founded in 2011 with former First Lady Michelle Obama.</p> <p>Biden will also visit San Francisco, California during this West Coast trip.</p> <p>The first lady previously visited Washington in March of 2021. During that visit, she visited Joint Base Lewis-McChord and Naval Air Station Whidbey Island. She received a tour of the facilities and got to speak with military families about their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 Seattle cop fired for offensive social media
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/seattle-police-officer-fired-over-derogatory-entirely-unacceptable-social-media-posts/AK7VIBQG75ARTALCXTOL5MNAGE/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — A Seattle police officer was fired last month following an internal investigation that found he violated department policy by posting content to Twitter that caused “great harm to the Department’s relationship with the community.”</p> <p>SPD launched the investigation after a Twitter user posted a lengthy thread last year that included screenshots of tweets posted by Officer Andrei Constantin, who used an anonymous Twitter account, in 2020 and 2021. Constantin’s Twitter account has since been deactivated.</p> <p>In its disciplinary action report following the investigation, SPD said Constantin’s tweets were “extremely unprofessional, offensive, derogatory, and entirely unacceptable.”</p> <p>The social media posts included content that celebrated violence against protestors, publicly accused SPD of hating its employees, blamed victims of assault and taunted family members of deceased individuals, according to the DAR report.</p> <p>In an interview with the Office of Police Accountability, Constantin reportedly admitted to posting the tweets on his personal account and expressed a high degree of remorse. He also expressed that he was “greatly impacted by the riots in 2020 and used social media to vent” and has since engaged in mental health treatment.</p> <p>The investigation ultimately determined that Constantin violated SPD’s social media policy and engaged in unprofessional behavior and bias-based policing.</p> <p>In his determination, SPD Chief Adrian Diaz also acknowledged Constantin’s history of disciplinary issues, including two prior suspensions.</p> <p>He was last suspended after he deliberately broke the driver’s side window of a car parked at a gas station while the driver and a passenger were inside of the vehicle, according to an OPA case summary released in March. Following this incident, he was suspended for eight days without pay and OPA recommended that he receive a training referral for additional coaching on “tactics and decision-making regarding solo officer contacts.”</p> <p>“I appreciate the steps you have taken to get support following the impact of 2020, and your service to this Department. However, in considering all the information provided, I also must take into account your history of discipline, which includes two prior suspensions for lack of professionalism and other SPD policy violations,” reads Diaz’s determination in part. “While I acknowledge the very difficult period you went through, your posts were inexcusable. The comments you made spewing contempt towards those with mental health problems, veterans, and many others. Ridiculing the parent of a deceased individual and celebrating violence are simply incompatible with the expectations and mission of the Department.”</p>

	<p>Constantin and his representatives met with Diaz on Sept. 8 to discuss the recommended discipline following the OPA investigation.</p> <p>He was fired later that month, as first reported by reporter Erica C. Barnett.</p> <p>SPD later confirmed to KIRO 7 that Constantin's employment with the department was terminated on Sept. 23.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 NOAA: remove 4 lower Snake River dams
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/noaa-determines-dams-on-lower-snake-river-must-be-breached
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - The final report from NOAA on rebuilding salmon and steelhead populations in the Columbia basin is out; among other actions, it calls for the removal of the four lower Snake River dams.</p> <p>It's a move that was expected after a draft report was published earlier this year, which already had people on opposing sides digging into pro-removal and anti-removal camps.</p> <p>"To say I'm disappointed would be an understatement," said Rep. Dan Newhouse, going on to say he'll continue to seek science-based solutions backing salmon populations and dams.</p> <p>What it means</p> <p>The report isn't policy, or law, but it lays out a defined plan of what needs to take place to ensure salmon and steelhead can be restored to 'abundance' by 2050.</p> <p>The strategies are wide-ranging, but breaching the four lower Snake River dams is the most controversial part, due in large part to economic benefits of the dams including power generation, moving farm goods via barge and irrigation.</p> <p>Other strategies include: habitat restoration, salmon hatcheries, reintroducing species, managing predators and improving water quality.</p> <p>What the report does not do is lay out a strategy for funding sources or implementing the plan, which is key. U.S. Senator Patty Murray and Governor Jay Inslee have previously said that benefits of the dams would need to be replaced before they could be breached. That means finding funding to not only remove the dams, but to offset the positives the dams provide.</p> <p>"The question is, 'How do we get it done,' that should be our focus," said Rob Masonis, Trout Unlimited's vice president of Western conservation. "We should be shifting from a focus of whether the Snake River dams need to be removed to how do we do it in a way that keeps communities whole, and a way that replaces the benefits the dams currently provide."</p> <p>Masonis backs removing the dams. He wants to move past the debate, and look ahead to funding mechanisms that could revitalize infrastructure while offering benefits to our salmon population. He pointed to a multi-billion dollar restoration effort of the Everglades, noting they're ensuring clean water, roads, bridges and other assets while improving habitat for dozens of endangered threatened species.</p> <p>"There isn't really an alternative for those who think the problem is going away," said Masonis. "It's not. We have an endangered species listing for these fish, meaning they're protected under federal law. We have obligations to Northwest Tribes that signed treaties that give them the right to harvest these salmon and steelhead in their territories, we have to meet this obligation."</p> <p>The price tag, however, will be steep—a previous draft report indicated the cost would likely land between \$10 and \$27 billion.</p> <p>The fight isn't over</p>

While Masonis is ready to move on, others aren't settling on dam removal as the only option forward. Rep. Newhouse's statement alluded to as much after the report came down, writing: "I will continue to work on effective, science-based solutions to protecting our salmon populations AND our dams."

Kurt Miller, executive director of Northwest RiverPartners, also said that the fight isn't done. His group launched an ad campaign during the spring which rallied people against breaching the dams. Now that the final report is out, he's not sure it'll lead to any change.

"We're disappointed with the outcome, but ultimately it doesn't do anything legally," said Miller. "I don't even think, from a policy perspective, it advances dam breaching."

Miller represents a large group of power generation, farming interests, local governments and others that benefit from the dams. While proponents of dam removal list climate change as one of the reasons to breach, Northwest RiverPartners say it's the reason the dams need to stay: that replacing hydropower would lead to climate change, ultimately impacting losses to the salmon population on the high seas.

"Our estimation is that getting rid of the dams actually is a step backward, given the severity of the climate change concern," he said. "So, we definitely believe salmon and dams can co-exist, and we think they probably will have to if we want to reverse climate change."

Replacing the lower Snake River Dams' power generation

In July, a study was published by E3 on replacing power that is currently generated by the lower Snake River dams.

The study notes that even with the dams in place, there will likely be growth in energy demand. The authors note that due to clean energy policy, growth and emerging technologies the forecast has a range that will depend on new technologies. They also assumed the dams would be breached in 2032 for most scenarios.

The findings estimated an annual cost of \$415 million to \$860 million – equaling a total cost of \$11.2 billion to \$19.6 billion. They also note that emerging tech in hydrogen, nuclear and carbon capture could allow replacement power generation to achieve a zero-emissions replacement, but there's an uncertainty in when some of those technologies will be viable.

Why it all matters

The plight of salmon in the Pacific Northwest is a story that stretches back decades. Not only are a number of salmon species on the endangered species list, but they are also the prey of another endangered species: the [Southern Resident killer whales](#).

Washington has poured millions of dollars into salmon recovery annually for years. Those in support of breaching the dams believe that the money will be wasted unless greater actions are taken.

As the report notes in its introduction, the U.S. government has made commitments to tribal nations when it comes to salmon and steelhead in the Columbia Basin. The Biden administration has also outlined a plan to protect U.S. lands and freshwater resources in the next decade. That plan includes honoring tribal Treaty Rights and conserving rivers and streams.

Pacific Northwest tribes have been involved in the decision-making process that led to this final report from NOAA on the Columbia Basin salmon and steelhead.

The ATNI issued a resolution in early 2022, writing: "ATNI calls on the President of the United States and the 117th Congress to ensure that funding is set aside now at this critical ecological juncture for salmon and orca, to implement the bold actions for salmon and river restoration."

	<p>The resolution goes on to back framework to breach the four lower Snake River dams, based on a plan that was put forth by Idaho Congressman Mike Simpson – a plan which called for the breaching of the lower Snake River dams.</p> <p>That plan isn't without controversy of its own, though. Simpson, a Republican, drew rebuke from fellow Republicans in Congress from the Pacific Northwest, including Cathy McMorris Rodgers, Dan Newhouse and Cliff Bentz. His plan also drew the ire of some environmental groups.</p> <p>How political interests align will matter moving forward, as any move to breach the dams will require major funding from Congress.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 Jury awards \$40K injured Portland protester
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/40k-awarded-to-woman-injured-by-portland-police-at-protests/
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — A jury on Tuesday awarded \$40,000 to a woman who sued the city of Portland over police use of force at a 2020 protest against police brutality, agreeing police used unreasonable force against her and committed battery.</p> <p>Erin Wenzel sued the city for assault, battery and negligence, claiming that on Aug. 14, 2020, an officer “ran at her and violently slammed into her with a nightstick” while she was leaving the area as police had instructed, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported. After she stood up, she said another officer pushed her.</p> <p>Jurors heard from medical experts during the trial who confirmed her arm was broken and that she has PTSD, at least in part, because of the incident.</p> <p>This was the first civil trial from the Portland 2020 racial justice protests to reach a jury. After the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police in late May 2020, protesters in Portland clashed nightly with Portland police and federal law enforcement officers from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Marshals Service.</p> <p>More than 50 similar lawsuits are pending against the city, and nearly two dozen Portland city attorneys and risk managers, as well as attorneys for plaintiffs involved in the pending lawsuits, at times tuned in to watch the proceedings.</p> <p>The jury awarded Wenzel \$14,106 for the battery claim and \$26,166 in non-economic damages. They decided that the police did not assault her and awarded no damages for that claim. Wenzel had asked for \$450,000.</p> <p>Battery is when someone intentionally hurts another person. Assault is when someone makes another person afraid they are going to be battered.</p> <p>Wenzel testified she didn't think the police would use force against her since she was complying with their orders, likely negating the assault claim.</p> <p>The jury also said the city was not negligent in how it trains police officers.</p> <p>The officers who pushed Wenzel were never identified and there is no known video of the incident. During the six-day trial, the jury heard from Wenzel who said she was at the protest as a medic and that her helmet was marked with a red cross. She also testified that she never threw anything at the police or participated in vandalism.</p> <p>After police rushed the crowd of protesters and pushed the group to disperse, Wenzel said she moved in the direction they had ordered.</p>

	<p>Several officers testified they believed that protesters who moved slowly during dispersals were often providing cover for other protesters to escape and they were therefore allowed to use force.</p> <p>Detective Erik Kammerer testified moving slowly or dispersing on its own does not warrant use of force but also said officers pushed intentionally slow walking people out of the way.</p> <p>The U.S. Department of Justice specifically cited that logic as violating bureau directives.</p> <p>Before the trial started, Multnomah County Circuit Court Judge Katharine von Ter Stegge limited admissible evidence to the approximately two-hour window Wenzel was at the protest. That meant video of Portland police pushing dispersing protesters on other nights couldn't be used to show the city was likely aware of and took no action to stop officers from using the tactic.</p> <p>The jury agreed that it is not acceptable for officers to push protesters for dispersing too slowly and that the city should be required to cover resulting medical expenses. The jury appeared less willing to award sizable monetary amounts for severe emotional distress and pain, a decision which could factor into settlement negotiations for the dozens of lawsuits pending against the city.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 SPD recruits study people they will serve
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/seattle-police-recruits-now-learn-about-history-communities-before-setting-foot-in-the-academy/
GIST	<p>Before they learn anything about defensive tactics or de-escalation techniques, Seattle police recruits are now participating in a first-of-its-kind training program designed to acquaint them with the people they will one day serve and build their own resiliency to counter the stress and vicarious trauma they will inevitably experience as officers.</p> <p>The Before the Badge program is part of the Seattle Police Department's response to the racial reckoning ignited by the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer in May 2020, and the resulting demands that police nationwide reimagine how they interact with their citizenry, particularly communities of color that have historically experienced biased policing.</p> <p>Recruits who have yet to attend the Basic Law Enforcement Academy, required for all entry-level officers in the state, are first learning the city's history and why there's been tension between Seattle police and different groups of residents — and how people's experiences can influence how they react when a cop knocks on their door.</p> <p>"I do think this is an opportunity for us to really change how we're training our officers and how we're offering a level of support for our brand-new recruits," said SPD Chief Adrian Diaz, who came up with the idea for the pre-academy training program. "There's no one [else] in the country doing this work ... We want to push that envelope, we want to do something that I think is innovative, that actually changes how we police."</p> <p>Recruits are attending community meetings and participating in discussions with people who've been incarcerated and struggled to reintegrate into the community. They're going on walking tours of neighborhoods and riding along with officers in each of the city's five precincts. And they're learning about psychology, brain development and the habits they can foster to keep themselves healthy in a profession whose members suffer from high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide, depression and alcohol and drug abuse.</p> <p>The 45-day Before the Badge training is also being offered to the department's community service officers — known as CSOs — who respond to noncriminal calls for service and perform a variety of public safety-related community service and outreach work.</p>

Roughly \$1.5 million from the department's existing budget was used to launch the program in June. [Mayor Bruce Harrell's proposed 2023 budget](#) includes \$446,000 to expand the program and hire a permanent program coordinator. The department has also applied for a grant through the U.S. Department of Justice's Community Policing Development Microgrant Program to further expand the Before the Badge training.

Recruits are currently participating in a series of [weekly community police discussions](#) via Zoom, with meetings set up for each precinct on Mondays through the end of November. Hosted by Seattle University Crime and Justice Research Center, the meetings are a chance for them to learn about issues unique to the city's neighborhoods and give residents the opportunity to ask recruits why they wanted to become officers.

About 35 people — recruits, veteran officers and CSOs among them — attended a recent Zoom meeting with residents of the Southwest Precinct. Racism, implicit bias, vicarious trauma and how stress can lead to negative interactions were among the topics discussed, with recruits also revealing details of their personal lives.

One said he speaks five languages, worked with the U.S. military in Afghanistan and wants to "bridge the gap" between police and the city's immigrant communities. Another, who grew up in Tacoma, called herself "a DACA kid" from Mexico, a reference to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals policy protecting immigrant youth from deportation. Some grew up here, others came from out of state.

"I decided to be a Seattle police officer because I wanted to make a positive impact in my community," said one recruit, who has a young son and a second child on the way. "I wanted to work for a police department that values training, values diversity. One officer said this is the most diverse police department in Washington."

Another recruit from Phoenix said he could have worked for a police department in Arizona but wanted to work in Seattle because of the SPD's reputation for instigating changes that eventually get adopted elsewhere.

"From what I know about Seattle, it's very passionate, very progressive and people here want change," he said.

Four recruits will start their basic training at the police academy next week — and the first three recruits to go through the Before the Badge training are expected to graduate from the academy in early November. Four of the 24 recruits who've either taken the training or are going through it now are women. Nine are white, nine are Hispanic, three are Black, two are Middle Eastern and one is Asian.

"They really want to be the change," Victoria Beach, who chairs the Police Department's African Advisory Council, said of the recruits.

Beach, who is Black, said she witnessed Seattle cops beat up members of her family as she was growing up in the Central District and as a result, she came to hate the police. Her opinion started to shift after she became a Block Watch captain in the late 1980s and met officers in her neighborhood.

"I thought, 'You know, they're not all bad.' It just slowly started changing me," she said.

Now in her 60s, Beach said she's taken plenty of flak from family and community members for working with and publicly supporting the police. But Beach — who has taught the recruits about the relationship between police and Seattle's Black community and participated in the training alongside them — says progress is being made and she wants to focus on the future, not past trauma.

"They're going to all these different communities so that they'll know how to respond and act and treat people. It's mind-blowing, it really is. And it makes me emotional because this is what we needed long ago, this type of training," Beach said. "I think this is going to change policing in our city."

Sgt. Ron Campbell, an instructor in the Police Department's training unit, said the program is meant to teach recruits about the city and have residents meet and relate to them as people first. It also provides recruits the opportunity to meet Seattle police officers, learn about different units and roles and foster relationships with their future colleagues — all things Campbell didn't get when he was hired 22 years ago.

He said he went to the academy, completed his field training and was assigned to patrol the East Precinct, an area of the city he didn't really know.

"I was really just learning from officers who had been there before. You're not done when you go to the academy — you're really learning for the first three to five years," Campbell said of his experience as a young officer. "I made some connections in the community but I think I would have been a better officer if I would have had this education we're providing now."

He said Floyd's murder, which he is confident would never have happened in Seattle because of the department's policies and training, was a watershed moment for police nationwide.

"I want the community to understand that we do really care, we heard — the entire world heard — how pissed off they were," Campbell said. "We're trying to fix that and fix ourselves and maybe look at re-imagining ourselves and how we can interact differently."

After the chaotic summer of 2020, when protesters tried to burn down the East Precinct and occupied part of Capitol Hill, Campbell said Seattle police officers were forced to question their commitment to the city and their reasons for doing the job.

"Some people answered that by leaving," he said, referring to the 400 cops who retired or resigned over the past two years.

Campbell said he wants the public to know the Police Department is working to improve its culture and responsiveness to community concerns and expects it'll take a few years before the impact of the new training is seen.

"You have some great officers on SPD and I think they're a little burnt out with the staffing shortage, but give us some time and a little bit of grace and I think you're going to see a model for how the entire nation would hopefully police in the future," he said.

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HEADLINE	10/04 Gas prices jump; West Coast acute spike
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/economy/gas-prices-jump-in-wa-with-acute-spike-on-the-west-coast/
GIST	<p>After about a two-month dip, gas prices are climbing again in Washington state, especially west of the Cascades, where levels are once again close to the June peak.</p> <p>At \$5.45 a gallon, gas prices in the Seattle area are up 15% from early September when prices fell to their lowest price since April, according to an analysis of federal Energy Information Administration data.</p> <p>The cost of a gallon of gas in Washington, as of Oct. 3, is \$1.39 above the national average. Generally, the cost of gas is higher on the West Coast in part due to the higher state taxes levied on crude oil.</p> <p>Tight supply and increased demand as more drivers fuel up are the main culprits, said AAA, adding that if the demand remains robust as supply tightens, drivers should brace for rising pump prices through the weekend.</p>

At the end of September, EIA data show the national demand for gas grew 6% to 8.83 million barrels per day from the previous week, while national stocks of motor fuel shrunk 1.1% from the previous week to 212.2 million barrels.

West Coast consumers are hurting most

The dip in motor fuel stocks was more pronounced on the West Coast, which recorded a 3.4% drop – the most among the five national regions analyzed by the EIA.

This corresponds with the particularly stark regional contrast in gas prices at the moment. Energy data show the West Coast recorded the highest increases in gas prices this past week with prices climbing past \$6 a gallon in California, followed by the Midwest states Ohio and Illinois, where the price is well below \$4.

“At least six California refineries are undergoing maintenance, and there is limited pipeline supply to the West Coast from locations east of the Rockies,” said Andrew Gross, AAA spokesperson.

Meanwhile, the cost of fuel continued to drop on the East Coast in states like Florida and New York, the Rocky Mountain region covering Colorado, Montana and Idaho, and in Gulf Coast states including Texas.

Where gas is cheapest in Washington

Within Washington, Skamania County in Southwest Washington and the San Juan Islands reported the highest gas prices, according to AAA data. King County and other counties in the western parts of the state are right behind.

Gas prices in the eastern parts of the state are closer to those in the Rocky Mountain region, with Pend Oreille County on the Idaho border recording the lowest gas price of \$4.67 a gallon.

Puget Sound-area consumers will likely [find the best deals](#) at the Safeway in Silverdale, Kitsap County, or the Walmart in Auburn in south King County, according to gas price tracker GasBuddy.com. Eastward, gas stations in Yakima and Kennewick offer the next best deals.

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HEADLINE	10/04 Injured Black Salem protester awarded \$1M
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/jury-awards-protester-injured-by-salem-police-1m-in-lawsuit/
GIST	<p>SALEM, Ore. (AP) — A jury has awarded a racial justice demonstrator more than \$1 million in a federal lawsuit she filed in 2020 against the city of Salem accusing officers of violating her civil rights.</p> <p>Eleaquia McCrae, a Black woman, sued the city and the police department, accusing police of intentionally targeting Black people with deadly force during the protest, which followed the killing of George Floyd, a Black man, by Minneapolis police officers in late May 2020.</p> <p>The jury found McCrae proved that Officer Robert Johnston shot her in the eye and chest with rubber bullets, and violated her “Fourth Amendment right not to be subjected to excessive force,” the Statesman Journal reported Monday. McCrae said the bullets caused permanent vision loss and a chest injury.</p> <p>The jury also found she did not prove by “preponderance of the evidence” that Johnston violated her First Amendment right to lawful assembly and that he committed battery against her.</p> <p>She was awarded \$250,000 in economic loss and \$800,000 in non-economic loss, the jury verdict documents said.</p> <p>McCrae’s attorney, Kevin Brague, said in the lawsuit that McCrae attended a demonstration on May 31, 2020, and after nightfall, people unrelated to the march arrived and began throwing objects. The demonstrators were then met by Salem police officers in “full militarized gear,” Brague said.</p>

	<p>McCrae said she, her sister and a friend were kneeling at the front of the march when police sirens blared and she was shot twice with rubber bullets.</p> <p>The city, through their lawyers, said McCrae's injuries, if any, were due to her own "negligent conduct by failing to disperse the area when the protests were no longer peaceful" and had at one point alleged McCrae was hit by an object thrown by another protester.</p> <p>"My client, Ms. Eleaqua McCrae, is very grateful for the jury and their recognition and validation of the facts and circumstances of this case," Kevin Brague, McCrae's attorney, said in an email to the newspaper.</p> <p>Salem officials said in a statement that they "appreciate the jury's work on this case and respect their verdict."</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 Seattle smoky amid record heat, low rainfall
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/weather/seattle-to-stay-smoky-amid-record-heat-low-rainfall/
GIST	<p>The air quality in Seattle was among the worst in the world Monday, ranking 10th, according to one online air quality database.</p> <p>That's thanks to mostly stagnant air allowing smoke from the Bolt Creek wildfire to "settle" in King and Snohomish Counties, said Maddie Kristell, meteorologist for the National Weather Service's Seattle office.</p> <p>The human-caused Bolt Creek wildfire that started early Sept. 10 is now at about 12,486 acres. As of Monday evening it was about 36% contained.</p> <p>Without a lot of wind, an overnight "downslope flow" carries smoke off the Cascades south toward Seattle, said Matthew Dehr, lead meteorologist for the state Department of Natural Resources.</p> <p>The smoke should be on its way out by Wednesday or Thursday, Kristell said, when an "onshore flow" is expected to treat the region to some marine air.</p> <p>Meanwhile, in and around the Cascades, the smoke will hang out all week, Dehr said. Areas near Lake Wenatchee to Leavenworth will have air quality in the unhealthy to hazardous range for the next week or so.</p> <p>People who have heart disease, or lung diseases like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or asthma; children; and pregnant people are more likely to be affected by health threats from smoke, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>The CDC recommends people keep windows and doors closed and run an air conditioner to keep indoor spaces smoke free, if possible. In Washington state, people can keep tabs on current and future air quality using the state Department of Ecology's Smoke Forecast.</p> <p>The Bolt Creek wildfire continues to burn "pretty actively" because of a combination of unseasonably warm September temperatures and a prolonged dry period, Dehr said.</p> <p>Seattle has had a record warm start to October, with three consecutive days over 75 degrees.</p> <p>Seattle has seen only 0.48 inches of rain from July to September, versus an average 3.16 inches, making it the driest that stretch has been on record, Dehr said.</p> <p>"The make-or-break point right now," he said, "for whether we're going to head into a drought or whether we're going to get back more to normal is how our October goes."</p>

HEADLINE	10/04 Food banks impacted by inflation, supply
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/food-banks-impacted-inflation-supply-chain-issues/281-8525825e-10e7-4e2f-aae3-f50e5acc20c0
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — At El Centro de la Raza, the marathon begins. Helping hands are preparing bags for food distribution on Thursday.</p> <p>"I would say about 200 to 400 per day, Thursday, and Friday. By the end of the week we need to make more bags each week," said Jason Li who is the Food Bank & Nutrient Program Manager. Li said at the beginning of the year they were serving 100 people a day.</p> <p>"Our trend is more and more clients are coming into our food bank," said Li.</p> <p>It's a problem being seen all over the county.</p> <p>"When you go to the store we've seen empty shelves of rice or milk or eggs, all these different items. There's a massive supply chain issue," said Joy Hollingsworth who is part of the Food Access Network Team for Northwest Harvest.</p> <p>The high inflation is a driver of need in our community as many live on the edge of insecurity.</p> <p>"As food prices continue to go up, as gas continues to go up, we've seen a lot of people who have accessed the food bank for the first time who have never gone there before because they've never experienced food insecurity," said Hollingsworth.</p> <p>Still, volunteers show up to stack the shelves. Hollingsworth said the demand is higher than ever.</p> <p>"When families are thinking about sacrificing, food is often the first to go," She said.</p> <p>According to the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, prices for groceries increased by 13.5%. It's the largest 12-month increase since March of 1979. Certain food groups increased from 9.4% to 16.2% and it's not just inflation that's an issue.</p> <p>"Sometimes there's a shortage of items like fresh produce and fresh protein, so that's why we have to buy them from a third-party vendor like Costco," said Li.</p> <p>Hollingsworth said items are also being discontinued. She said a way to remedy this issue is by donations, even if you can't give ten dollars, one or two makes a huge difference.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 Expect 2023 utility rate hikes in western WA
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/money/utility-rate-hikes-western-washington/281-098309f6-b70d-4de1-8a3c-eb1f94c42d8e
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. — A number of utility agencies have submitted for rate increases for 2023.</p> <p>While in some cases they are routine, they come as consumers are also budgeting for increases in other areas of their expenses.</p> <p>Puget Sound Energy said that in addition to a cost increase for 2023, it expects an increased cost for residential customers in November due to a rise in wholesale gas prices.</p> <p>Seattle City Council recently passed a 4.5% increase for Seattle City Light for 2023 and 2024, estimating it will cost the average resident less than \$5 more each month, according to a council spokesperson.</p>

Tacoma Public Utilities also [announced](#) rates for customers' power and water will include an increase on average of about \$3.70 month.

All of these figures assume a customer is paying standard rates, but many assistance programs are available that can help with the costs of bills and weatherization.

John Dennis is a veteran who lives in Tacoma and is now working his second career. He said he and his family have been able to handle yearly price increases in utilities, but he has noticed rising costs on a little bit of everything.

"Health care, food, gas, insurance, everything," Dennis said. "You get a raise, but by the time you get that raise, it's basically like the economy has taken that away."

Dennis said as he nears "second retirement," he expects he'll pay a little more attention to budgeting as they deal with a more fixed income.

"Then I have to look more at my bills to decide what I can afford," Dennis said.

Nathan Abma recently moved to Washington and lived in a number of states during his military career. He said he's actually seen some welcome changes in costs in Washington, as compared to Hawaii and other places he has lived.

"The face value costs like housing are substantially higher but you make up for that with easier living," Abma said.

He said he does not expect the utility rate increases to play a major role on their own, but he acknowledges that combined increased expenses can be difficult for some to afford.

"The bottom is the segment getting pinched, I am no longer in that segment, but I've felt that before," Abma said. "[To support workers], when prices go up on the menu, shrug it off, make sure people get paid, make sure they're getting taken care of. If you're getting take care of, make sure everyone else is too."

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HEADLINE	10/04 Ian deadliest Florida hurricane since 1935
SOURCE	https://www.accuweather.com/en/hurricane/florida-faces-grim-reality-hurricane-ian-is-deadliest-storm-in-state-since-1935/1257775
GIST	<p>Nearly a week after Hurricane Ian obliterated communities in Florida, the death toll continues to rise as rescue crews go door-to-door in some of the hardest-hit communities. While hundreds of thousands remained without power on Tuesday and roadways were still flooded, construction on a makeshift bridge broke ground to help those stranded on Pine Island, one of several barrier islands that suffered the full force of Ian's wrath.</p> <p>The death toll surpassed a grim milestone on Monday, with at least 105 confirmed U.S. fatalities blamed on Ian, CNN Newsource reported. At least 101 of those deaths occurred in Florida, as well as four in North Carolina, according to the governor there. In Florida, Lee County was the largest source of the casualties, with 54 deaths reported by county officials. The Associated Press also reported three fatalities in Cuba, where Ian struck before hitting the U.S.</p> <p>Most of the deaths from the hurricane were a result of drowning, but some have been blamed on harsh consequences in the aftermath of the storm, such as an elderly couple who died after power to their oxygen machines shut off.</p>

"Although the death toll from Ian is fluid and historical numbers are inexact, Ian is likely the deadliest tropical system for the state of Florida since the 1935 Labor Day Hurricane, which killed over 400 people," AccuWeather Senior Weather Editor Jesse Ferrell said.

New photos and videos emerging from the epicenter of where Hurricane Ian made landfall show the sheer power the storm packed. Homes are barely recognizable on Captiva Island, a barrier island in Lee County right near where Ian made its first United States landfall as a Category 4 storm.

Footage captured by storm chaser Brandon Clement shows debris, fallen trees and power lines scattered around the island. Inside homes, watermark stains tell a harrowing tale about just how high the storm surge rose. Furniture can be seen scattered about, and the floors are covered in a mixture of sand and mud.

Despite nearly a week having passed since Hurricane Ian brought torrential rainfall and catastrophic storm surge to Florida, river levels continued to rise Monday, and homes and streets in many places were still inundated.

"The sandy soil in Florida can absorb light to moderate amounts of rain rather quickly, but when you get rainfall of 1-2 feet, even that can be overwhelmed," [AccuWeather](#) Senior Meteorologist Alex Sosnowski explained. "It can take a long time for that to drain off."

Officials warn the floodwaters will make for a dangerous situation as rescue and recovery efforts continue. "We see so many more injuries and sometimes more fatalities after the storm," Deanne Criswell, administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency told *Fox News Sunday*, [The Associated Press reported](#). "Standing water brings with it all kinds of hazards -- it has debris, it could have power lines."

Officials said thousands of people had been rescued in the days since the storm left its vicious mark. The federal response to the ongoing search-and-rescue process could be one of the biggest ever.

"We pre-positioned the largest amount of search-and-rescue assets that I think we've ever put in place before," [Criswell said during her appearance](#) on *Fox News Sunday*.

President Joe Biden is expected to travel to Florida Wednesday to visit areas that were ravaged by Ian. [On Monday, Biden visited Puerto Rico](#), which is still recovering from Hurricane Fiona's powerful strike two weeks ago.

Lee County officials have come under scrutiny about whether they provided residents with ample warning to evacuate. [According to the Orlando Sentinel](#), officials along much of the coastline ordered residents to evacuate Monday, but Lee County officials "pondered" the decision, waiting to see how the forecast evolved overnight. By Tuesday, Lee County officials issued the evacuation notice.

According to Lee County's evacuation strategy plan, the delay is an apparent violation and may have contributed to fatal consequences as the death toll continues to rise, the Orlando Sentinel reported.

Over the weekend, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis defended the state's early preparations for Hurricane Ian as questions arose on whether or not hard-hit areas, like Lee County, received enough advance warning to evacuate, [Politico reported](#).

"When we went to bed Monday night, people were saying this is a direct hit on Tampa Bay -- worst-case scenario for the state," DeSantis told reporters as he defended the Lee County officials who issued the evacuation notice on Tuesday instead of Monday. Lee County includes [Sanibel Island](#), Pine Island, [Fort Myers Beach](#) and Fort Myers -- some of the worst-hit places.

Imagery from Clement revealed that many houses on barrier islands in Lee County did not stand a chance from the powerful winds and storm surge Ian delivered. A blue house, along with a few other homes on

Captiva Island, remained standing as surrounding buildings were brought down to their foundation. Debris could be seen scattered in all directions.

On Monday, Lee County Sheriff Carmine Marceno stated that the [death toll in the county was at 54](#), and that search-and-rescue teams have rescued 800 people thus far. Marceno said it is unknown how many people are still missing, and that rescue efforts are continuing, including the deployment of 100 National Guard members to Pine Island.

[DeSantis' office on Monday](#) stated that as of 7 a.m. EDT Monday, more than 1,900 rescues had been made in the state, with more than 1,000 search-and-rescue team members deployed.

The sudden surge of water during the storm's landfall forced many residents who didn't evacuate to seek shelter on roofs or in attics. Fort Myers residents described the water pushing through their doors and walls.

"Within 30 minutes it was up to my door and within an hour it was pushing through my door," Jeannel Thyl, a Fort Myers resident, told AFP.

Before and after [satellite imagery from Maxar](#) showed just how devastating the hurricane was to the state. Neighborhoods have disappeared and coastlines were left changed. Flooded roadways and crumbled bridges left many people stranded with limited cellphone coverage and no water, electricity or internet.

DeSantis said at a press conference on Sunday that construction of a temporary passageway for Pine Island will begin this week, the AP reported.

"It's not going to be a full bridge," the governor said. "You're going to have to go over it probably at 5 miles an hour or something, but it'll at least let people get in and off the island with their vehicles."

DeSantis held a briefing at the State Emergency Operations Center Monday, promoting debris removal in communities "where it is safe to do so."

Florida first lady Casey DeSantis stated that the Florida Disaster Fund [had raised over \\$21 million](#) within the first 48 hours of the fund website's activation. State figureheads have been making donations to the fund, such as [Tampa Bay Buccaneers superstar Tom Brady](#), who called upon the "rest of the NFL family in our state" to also help recovery causes.

Florida officials said on Monday that some schools in the southwestern part of the state could open as soon as this week, once power and water are restored. However, it could be much longer before schools in the hardest-hit locations welcome students back. As of Monday, 46 districts were open in the state as a whole, with DeSantis' office stating that "many more" would be opening later in the week.

As of Tuesday morning, around 440,000 customers were without power in Florida, a sharp drop from a peak of 2.6 million outages Thursday morning, [according to PowerOutage.US](#). On Monday, officials in Lee County said that the power outage in Fort Myers Beach [could last at least a month](#). Lee County still had over 230,000 customers without power as of Tuesday, with neighboring Charlotte County at around 120,000 outages.

"It's horrible. As they say, it's like a war zone. Everything that you used to know is gone," Alice Barrett, a Fort Myers Beach resident, told [AccuWeather](#) National Reporter Bill Wadell. "I mean, there's very few buildings that are standing. It's hard to imagine. From this beautiful place that you love -- it's all gone. It's just hard."

The shocking scenes of destruction hint at how sweeping and long-lasting the impact across Florida will be felt. The economic fallout caused by the storm will be immense, AccuWeather Founder and CEO Dr. Joel N. Myers said -- on par with some of the worst hurricane damage in U.S. history. According to

Myers, the total losses caused by Hurricane Ian will amount to between \$180 billion and \$210 billion in the U.S.

“Ian will go down as one of the most damaging and impactful storms in U.S. history, along with 2017’s Hurricane Harvey, which caused \$190 billion in total damage and economic loss,” Myers said.

“The economic impact of this storm should not be underestimated,” Myers added. “At \$200 billion, that amounts to 1 percent of our national GDP, which is a significant hit on the economy and the entire country and could even be the difference between growth and recession, causing the Federal Reserve to keep from raising interest rates further for the remainder of the year.”

When Ian made landfall last Wednesday in southwestern Florida, it unleashed relentless wind gusts across the peninsula. The highest official reported wind gust was 128 mph, recorded by a WeatherFlow station in Grove City. However, locally higher wind speeds that weren’t officially observed may have also occurred.

Rainfall across the state was staggering, too. In just 24 hours, automated rain gauges reported as much as 31.52 inches of rain near Ponce Inlet, a coastal community northeast of Orlando. Rainfall totals combined with the ferocious storm surge wreaked havoc on barrier islands and areas close to the coast.

In addition to the flooding rainfall and relentless wind Ian brought to the Sunshine State, a cluster of tornadoes touched down over South Florida from Sept. 27 to Sept. 28 — the day before and day of landfall. [According to the Storm Prediction Center](#) (SPC), there were 11 confirmed tornadoes across the southern third of the state. Of those, the strongest tornado surveyed by the NWS office in Miami was an **EF2** near Kings Point, just south of West Palm Beach.

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HEADLINE	10/04 Jolt: job openings plunge 1.1M in August
SOURCE	https://www.cnbc.com/2022/10/04/jolts-august-2022.html
GIST	<p>The number of job openings plunged by more than a million in August, providing a potential early sign that the massive U.S. labor gap is beginning to close.</p> <p>Available positions totaled 10.05 million for the month, a 10% drop from the 11.17 million reported in July, according to a Bureau of Labor Statistics release Tuesday. That was also well below the 11.1 million FactSet estimate and was the biggest one-month decline since April 2020 in the early days of the Covid pandemic.</p> <p>The number of hires rose slightly, while total separations jumped by 182,000. Quits, or those who left their jobs voluntarily, rose by 100,000 for the month to 4.16 million.</p> <p>The Job Openings and Labor Turnover numbers are watched closely by the Federal Reserve, which is trying to reverse runaway inflation through a series of five interest rate increases this year that thus far have totaled 3 percentage points.</p> <p>One primary area of interest for the central bank has been the ultra-tight labor market, which had been showing about two job openings for every available worker. That ratio contracted to 1.67 to 1 in August.</p> <p>The job market has been a primary driver of inflation, as the outsized demand for the scarce labor pool has helped drive up wages sharply. Average hourly earnings rose 5.2% over the 12-month period through August. But adjusted for inflation, real earnings actually declined 2.8%.</p> <p>“Job openings took a major dive in August, falling by more than about 1 million, but they still total more than 10 million. That and other data point to a jobs market that’s still challenging for employers,” said Robert Frick, corporate economist at Navy Federal Credit Union. “But judging by the drop in openings and the high number of Americans who entered the labor force in August, almost 900,000, the worst of the tight labor market is over.”</p>

Health care and social assistance saw the biggest drop in vacancies, falling by 236,000. The “other services” category saw a decline of 183,000, while retail was down 143,000.

Aligning labor supply with demand has been a big goal for the Fed, which uses rate increases to slow the flow of money through the economy. The labor market has shown little reaction to the moves, with weekly jobless claims recently hitting [a five-month low](#) and [the unemployment rate at 3.7%](#).

August did see a sharp bump in the labor force, which increased by 786,000, pushing up the participation rate by 0.3 percentage point to 62.4%, tied for highest of the year. The rate remains one full percentage point below where it was in February 2020, just prior to the pandemic.

Markets still expect the Fed to push forward with a fourth consecutive 0.75 percentage point interest rate hike at its next meeting.

Tuesday’s release comes ahead of Friday’s nonfarm payrolls report for September, which is expected to show a gain of 275,000, according to Dow Jones.

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HEADLINE	10/04 WA homeless program early positive signs
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3659473/state-homeless-program-showing-early-positive-signs-encampments/
GIST	<p>The fire under the Ship Canal Bridge last week highlighted just how dangerous it can be to have freeways and homeless encampments so close together, not just for camp residents, but for travelers. That camp is now being evaluated and addressed by the state government under a new program that is already showing positive results.</p> <p>The Governor and legislature launched the “Right of Way Safety Initiative” to great fanfare earlier this year. It’s a program that finally throws all the players together to remove these camps and get residents into housing.</p> <p>With the new funding, \$143 million in total so far, the initiative has set out to provide services to reduce homeless camps in King, Pierce, Thurston, Snohomish, and Spokane counties.</p> <p>The Washington Department of Transportation’s Barbara LaBoe said the money helps local agencies go into these encampments, assess what the people need, and find them a new place to stay before they clear the areas, which are on state land.</p> <p>“The focus on this is not to just merely move someone from the encampment – although those areas are not safe – but to find them a better living situation; be that a shelter or on the pathway to permanent housing,” LaBoe said.</p> <p>The state has focused on some of the biggest camps along Interstate 5 and Interstate 90, having cleared five of them so far, three in Thurston County and two in King County. The largest of the camps was in Seattle at Dearborn and I-5.</p> <p>One of the challenges of clearing these homeless encampments is that the people generally don’t have another place to go, they just move on down the road to a new camp. With this program, the housing is there before the camps are cleared, with the hopes that people will accept offers for transitional housing more often.</p> <p>And so far, LaBoe said, the program is successful.</p> <p>“98 people were offered housing, sometimes at shelters and sometimes at permanent housing, and of that 98, 77 people accepted,” she said.</p>

	<p>That's a high amount of people accepting help moving to a shelter, considering what we have seen historically.</p> <p>Plus, they are more likely to remain in housing. A recent check on those 77 who accepted help, found that 73 of them are still in housing.</p> <p>"If you go in and just try to move people, they will likely find another place to live outside," LaBoe said. "That's not the end goal that we want. It's not good for them. It's not good for the overall community. This takes a little longer, but it seems to have better outcomes in the end."</p> <p>Unlike sweeps, this program spends a lot of time in the camp before ever giving notice of removal. This allows workers to create trust with those in the camps and to help find them places to go.</p> <p>That work is already underway at the site of the fire last week under the Ship Canal Bridge.</p> <p>"That Ship Canal Bridge site is one of the ones we're aware of, and we do have outreach groups already making some contacts there," LaBoe said.</p> <p>The goal is to take this model statewide, but that will require a lot more money going forward.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 Ukraine hammers Russia forces in retreat
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/10/04/russia-retreat-kherson-lyman-ukraine/
GIST	<p>Ukrainian troops on Tuesday accelerated their military advances on two fronts, pushing Russian forces into retreat in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions to the east and Kherson region to the south.</p> <p>The gains showed Kyiv continuing to recapture occupied territory on the same day that President Vladimir Putin and his rubber-stamp parliament sought to formalize their increasingly far-fetched "annexation" of four Ukrainian regions.</p> <p>"The Ukrainian armed forces commanders in the south and east are throwing problems at the Russian chain of command faster than the Russians can effectively respond," said a Western official who briefed reporters about sensitive security information on the condition of anonymity. "And this is compounding the existing dysfunction within the Russian invasion force."</p> <p>Ukraine has been pushing to take back as much of its occupied territory as it can before Russia potentially sends hundreds of thousands of reinforcements to the battlefield, following a recent mobilization effort.</p> <p>The Ukrainian counteroffensive, which had moved far more slowly in the south compared to the lightning push through the northeastern Kharkiv region in September, has suddenly picked up speed, with Russian units retreating in recent days from a large swath of territory along the west bank of the Dnieper River.</p> <p>Ukrainian forces pushed ahead dozens of miles into the southern Kherson region, liberating towns and villages and re-creating scenes from mid-September when they swept into Kharkiv and were greeted by joyful residents who had spent many months under Russian occupation.</p> <p>On Monday, the spokesperson for the Russian Defense Ministry acknowledged that "superior tank units" of Ukraine had "wedged in the depth of our defense line" near the villages of Zolota Balka and Oleksandrivka in the Kherson region.</p> <p>Overnight, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Ukraine's 129th Brigade from his native city of Kryvyi Rih had liberated the settlements of Arkhanhelske and Myrolyubivka.</p>

A video shared on social media by soldiers from the 35th Marine Infantry Brigade of Ukraine's navy showed the capture of Davydiv Brid, which delivered a major blow to Russian supply lines in the Kherson region.

Regaining control of Kherson, a rich agricultural region whose capital is an important port where the Dnieper flows into the Black Sea, is critical for Ukraine. The capital was the first significant city captured by Russia at the start of its invasion in late February, and its loss would be a severe setback for Russia — strategically crippling for the military and politically humiliating for Putin.

Kherson, the only position the Russians hold west of the Dnieper, is a potential strategic springboard for Russia to launch any future offensive down the Black Sea coast toward the storied port city of Odessa.

Ukrainian officials had touted an operation to liberate Kherson for months, potentially drawing Russian troops away from Kharkiv. But until now, Ukrainian forces had struggled in the south, suffering heavy casualties but making few territorial advances.

The Ukrainian gains in Kherson follow the recapture over the weekend of the strategic transit hub of Lyman, in eastern Donetsk. The Ukrainians then pushed through Lyman, apparently intent on extending their gains into Luhansk, the region where Russia has maintained its strongest grip.

The collapse of the Russian position in Lyman was notable because it occurred just as Putin was claiming that the city and all of Donetsk region, along with Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, were annexed and restored to Russia as part of its historical lands. But unlike in Kharkiv, where Moscow ordered a retreat, Russian forces had apparently been told to defend Lyman.

“All Russian forces withdrew in poor order, suffering high casualties from artillery fire as they attempted to leave the town to the East,” the Western official said of Lyman, comparing it to Kharkiv. “Then, as you recall, troops received an order to cede the territory,” the official said. “But in Lyman, we think that the Russian troops retreated despite orders to defend and remain.”

“Relinquishing this area is exactly what the Kremlin did not want to happen,” the official said.

As a result, Russian control over the Luhansk region, which was mostly uncontested since June, is now also in jeopardy.

The Institute for the Study of War (ISW), a Washington-based think tank, said that geolocated footage corroborates statements from Russian military figures that Ukrainian troops are continuing their advance east of Lyman, apparently gearing up for a fight over the town of Kreminna.

The new round of Russian setbacks revived quibbling over Kremlin strategy among pro-Russian military bloggers, who for months have provided a more detailed and less censored look into the Russian war campaign compared to official military reports.

“I am now being reproached for driving people into depression with my news,” Alexander Kots, a military correspondent for Komsomlskaya Pravda newspaper, wrote Tuesday on his Telegram blog, which has more than 600,000 subscribers. “Well, there will be no good news in the near future neither from the Kherson front, nor from now Luhansk.”

“In many sectors the fatigue has set in after a long offensive period, during which large territories have been liberated,” Kots added. “But there is no longer any strength left to hold them.”

Videos posted by Russian independent outlet Astra show pro-Russian fighters from the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic camping out in an open field and complaining that Russian commanders abandoned them while withdrawing.

In the videos, a man in worn-out fatigues said the Russians' losses in the area were huge, with only 193 survivors and a few pieces of heavy equipment left from their initial convoy. The Washington Post could not independently verify the video clips.

Another popular Russian war blogger, known as Rybar, posted maps showing how the Russian hold on the Kherson region shrank dramatically in the span of just a few hours. Losing the west bank of the Dnieper River to Ukrainian control would be "an immediate danger" for remaining Russian units in the area, Rybar wrote to his nearly 1 million followers.

As Russia was retreating on the battlefield, Zelensky on Tuesday signed a decree formally refusing any negotiations with Putin — a largely symbolic move to show Kyiv's confidence in how developments are unfolding on the battlefield.

Meanwhile, the political theater continued in Moscow, where the Federation Council, the upper chamber of the Russian parliament, rubber-stamped Putin's annexation of the four Ukrainian regions

Putin and other officials have warned that Russia would feel entitled to defend its newly seized territories by all possible means — including, potentially, the use of nuclear weapons.

The annexation legislation now passes back to the Kremlin for Putin's final signature, which from Russia's perspective would complete the process of seizing more than 15 percent of all Ukrainian sovereign territory. Officials said Putin was likely to sign on Tuesday.

Putin's brazen land-grab attempt was met with overwhelming international condemnation. Even countries that traditionally maintain closer ties to Moscow, such as Turkey and Serbia, joined Western nations in refusing to recognize the annexation.

North Korea, however, said it would recognize Russia's new borders.

Putin is now apparently betting on the unpopular mobilization drive that aims to call up hundreds of thousands of men to help hold ground in the annexed regions.

On Tuesday, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu announced that more than 200,000 men have been sent to the Russian armed forces in the two weeks since Putin announced the mobilization on Sept. 21.

At the same time, the interior minister in neighboring Kazakhstan, Marat Akhmetzhanov, said that an equivalent number of Russians — about 200,000 — had crossed that country's border since Sept. 21, most of them apparently fleeing the mobilization or leaving out of fear that Putin would soon impose martial law and bar international travel. Tens of thousands more Russians have fled to other neighboring countries, including Georgia and Finland.

The botched mobilization has led to severe recriminations in Russia, with some governors expressing fury that men who are too old or otherwise unqualified are being wrongly called to duty.

Shoigu, the defense minister, tried to answer a torrent of recent reports on Russian social media from mobilized men and their family members complaining about the lack of appropriate equipment in military units, which forced some newly minted soldiers to seek protective gear themselves.

"Officials have been instructed to provide the mobilized with the necessary sets of clothing and other equipment," Shoigu said, adding that 80 training grounds across Russia are now accepting newly mobilized soldiers.

But there were signs that Russia was not able to properly equip its recruits.

Prices of bulletproof vests have dramatically increased in Russia over the past two weeks, with some stores hiking the prices more than tenfold, local media reported. In total, a soldier looking to purchase a

	full uniform appropriate for fighting in Ukraine would have to spend roughly \$3,000 out of pocket, the Baza news outlet reported.
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HEADLINE	10/04 Historic heat, drought threatens ranchers
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/10/04/drought-livestock-cattle-great-plains/
GIST	<p>MCCOOK, Neb. — As the sun rose on another hot day, rancher Brad Randel rode through his feed lot working at a grim task — culling cattle from his herd because his ranch’s sparse grass can’t sustain them during a crushing drought.</p> <p>As Randel swung his quarter horse Bay Belle in tight circles, he and a ranch hand separated runty Black Angus heifers to be sold at a livestock auction from the more promising stock. The cows bellowed as the temperature began its climb into the high 90s, the remnants of a late-summer heat wave that blasted the American West with furnace-like temperatures.</p> <p>In other years, Randel would have kept the smaller heifers longer to see if he could fatten them up. “But this is no typical year,” he said.</p> <p>For more than a year, southwest Nebraska has been in the throes of a record drought that has transformed acres of rich pasture and cropland into miles of dirt and ruined corn, soybeans and milo. Wildfires fueled by high temperatures and dry grass swept through more than 140,000 acres this spring, and rivers, ponds and streams have dried up, forcing ranchers to drive miles to bring water to their parched animals.</p> <p>The shift threatens a way of life for farmers and ranchers, including many who have worked this corner of the prairie since their great-grandparents homesteaded properties in the late 19th century. In a summer where a surprise early heat wave killed more than 2,000 cattle in Kansas that had not yet shed their winter coats, and water scarcity has deprived many animals of critical sustenance, operators are scrambling to adjust.</p> <p>Randel and other ranchers are going to great lengths to protect their animals, including closely monitoring temperatures in feed lots and supplying cooling mists, and many are embracing longer-term measures like cutting back on tilling and planting cover crops to prevent soil erosion.</p> <p>The Biden administration has committed more than \$22 billion to climate-friendly farming practices in the Inflation Reduction Act and other measures, on top of more than \$4 billion in disaster relief. Yet many of these Americans still say they don’t believe in climate change and view federal attempts to address agriculture’s greenhouse gas emissions — some 11 percent of the U.S. total — with suspicion.</p> <p>Even these steps may not be able to compensate for the drought conditions and extreme weather pummeling the region. This summer ranked as America’s third hottest on record, with Nebraska “ground zero” for drought, seeing its third driest June through August period, with an average of 5.8 inches of precipitation.</p> <p>Randel, a lanky man of deep Christian faith, is praying — along with many of his neighbors — that this latest crushing weather pattern is just one more cycle of tough times on the Great Plains, where, the familiar saying goes, every day that goes by is one day closer to the next rain. But if it doesn’t snow this winter, he says, he’s not sure his cattle operation will survive. He’s already reduced his herd by 37 percent.</p> <p>“If we don’t get moisture through the winter, then it’s going to be herd liquidation. We’ll have to get rid of everything,” he said. “I don’t know what we’ll do! We’ve never been here before.”</p> <p>‘Send rain to this thirsty land’</p> <p>Randel’s sprawling ranch just northeast of McCook, that has been in his family since 1887, offers a visual road map of the toll the drought has taken on this region. It traverses dried-up creeks, desiccated rows of</p>

corn and a field where six-foot-high weeds normally grow to shelter calves in winter, now reduced to nothing but dirt.

Randel, who lives on the ranch in a low-slung brick home with his wife and two of his daughters — a third is away at college — says the trouble began last summer, when the area got little rain. Then came a snowless winter and another dry spring. So far this year the ranch has gotten nine inches of rain, he said, in a county that normally gets 22 inches of rain a year.

“My dad was famous for saying, ‘It gets like this, we’ve seen droughts before,’” Randel said. “In this country things can turn around in a hurry. One day it can be 100 degrees and the next it’s 40. One day it’s blowing dust and the next you’re fighting mud. We’re ready for that turnaround.”

Farmers and ranchers in the Great Plains have always endured weather extremes, but they’ve been buffeted by a series of recent record-breaking catastrophes that have raised alarms about the risk of extreme weather, according to John K. Hansen, the president of the Nebraska Farmers Union. A “bomb cyclone” buried cows alive, killed three and caused the worst flooding the state has ever seen in 2019, then, in December of last year, a storm spawned several tornadoes, an unheard-of event.

“The drought is just one more out-of-the ordinary extreme weather event. Climate change isn’t coming, climate change is here,” said Hansen, an outlier among many in Nebraska’s farming community.

Hansen said a growing number of farmers have sought mental help from the state’s Rural Response Hotline, seeking vouchers that they can use for counseling — up to 8,046 last year, more than triple the number three years ago. That is one measure of the stress that farm families are under from the twin pressures of the extreme weather and the fallout from the global pandemic, he said.

In McCook, a close-knit town of 7,400 people about four hours east of Denver, the livestock sale barn and its weekly auction have been the heart of civic life since the 1940s.

The manager, Art Ruggles, said that ranchers began bringing their young calves to sell far earlier than normal this summer because they could no longer feed them. Some have been forced to liquidate their entire herds, he said. His family has farmed in the area for over a century, Ruggles said, and the drought is the “worst we’ve seen.”

“People are really negative. I mean, they’re scared,” said Gary Power, 80, a sheep and goat farmer in McCook. “They’re saying, ‘What are we going to do for feed to feed our livestock?’ and ‘Our wheat harvest is one-third of what we were expecting, how long before the bank forecloses?’ ”

Randel’s church recently held a week of noontime prayer vigils where church volunteers passed out fliers that read, “Lord, we are facing severe drought and we plead with You to open the heavens and send rain to this thirsty land.”

On the ranch, Randel, 48, delayed turning out cattle onto their pasture for summer grazing for 45 days. When the rain still didn’t come, he brought them home to be fed in a paddock in August, four months earlier than normal. Ranchers are struggling to find feed for their livestock as the price of hay — if it even can be found — skyrocketed from \$192 a ton in 2020 to \$333 this year, according to an American Farm Bureau Federation analysis.

The animals seemed confused to end up in a dry pen, a strange stopover from the pasture to their normal winter feeding in fields of tasty corn stalks. Randel’s wife, Adrienne, 47, watched with worry from the picture window in her kitchen as the cows paced along the fence line, obviously not content.

“They seemed to know something was wrong,” she said.

On a recent stop to check on some of their cattle that remained in the pasture, the couple found the animals nibbling at whatever little bit of green they could find — weeds and brownish blades — on a sun-drenched hillside below a field of ruined corn.

“It’s sad, because you always like to see them grazing on lush grass,” said Brad.

“Then you know they’re happy, or at least that’s what I think,” Adrienne said. But she was heartened to see the animals still looked healthy and had a sheen to their coat.

“They look pretty good!” she said.

A historic drought

During the heat wave in early June in western Kansas, Scott Whiting witnessed something on his ranch in Dighton that he never seen before — his cattle trying to climb into their water tanks in a desperate attempt to keep cool. Two of his calves did not survive.

“It was just brutal,” Whiting recalled, a “perfect storm” of factors causing the deaths, including the heat, humidity, hotter-than-usual nights and cattle that had not shed their winter coats.

Ultimately more than 2,000 animals died in the heat wave, leaving rows of carcasses captured in devastating video that made the rounds on social media.

During that four-day period, nearby Dodge City, Kan., reported its highest overnight minimum temperature (83 degrees on June 13) since record-keeping began in 1874, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

For Whiting, making sure his cattle have access to water and can keep cool has been a daily battle. He checks on them constantly, set up new sprinklers and is even now contemplating switching from Black Angus cattle — whose dark coats absorb the heat — to lighter-colored animals.

“I’ve got a lot of miles to put on every day just to check on the cattle,” he said. “Sometimes in extreme heat I’ll check the windmills twice a day. We’re set up to haul water if we have to — to be ready to go at a moment’s notice.”

More than 40 percent of the continental U.S. has been in drought for nearly two full years, according to Brad Rippey, a meteorologist with the USDA, going back as far as late September 2020. The current dry spell, which set a modern record when it hit 102 consecutive weeks on Sept. 6, has impacted the country’s most important ranching and grazing lands in the central and western United States.

Clay Pope, an Oklahoma rancher who does outreach for the USDA’s Southern Plains Climate Hub, said that farmers and ranchers — even conservatives who might chafe at the terms “global warming” or “climate change” — need to bolster their land from extreme weather events by minimizing soil tilling, planting cover crops to protect the soil moisture and nutrients during fallow times and using controlled fires to rejuvenate pastures.

“There may be folks that don’t believe in climate change but I’ve never met anybody who doesn’t believe in drought and floods,” Pope said. “Extreme weather is our new reality. We have to deal with it.”

Pope noted that existing USDA conservation programs, which always have way more farmers who want to participate than they can include, got a “huge shot of money” for climate-resilient practices in the Inflation Reduction Act. There’s plenty of room for improvement: Only about a third of cultivated crop acreage is farmed without tilling soil, and even fewer farmers plant cover crops — about six percent of crop acres — like the Randels.

Rich Johnson, 66, a rancher from Tilden, Neb., who does believe humans are driving climate change, said that even with such government help, he wonders how long ranching operations like his can endure. A

recent American Farm Bureau Federation survey found that 66 percent of respondents have had to sell portions of their herds or flocks this year because of the drought, and only 14 percent of those who sold last year were looking at building back.

Nebraska sits on the Ogallala Aquifer, the vast underground expanse of water spread out over eight states that has sustained agriculture for generations. But people are rapidly depleting it faster than it can recharge, scientists say.

Johnson would like to pass his operation onto his son, but wonders what conditions will be like for his grandson, Cooper, who is now 5.

“Jeez, my grandson, what’s he going to have to deal with?” Johnson said. “I’m watching all the [irrigation] pivots goin’ and I’m thinking, ‘Are we going to be able to do that forever?’ ”

Auctions under pressure

After he culled the herd, Randel and his ranch hands loaded up the 350 young heifers and steers and trucked them about 10 miles up the road to McCook’s Tri-State Livestock Commission sale barn, which draws farmers from throughout the region for its Monday auction. Inside, handlers steered cattle through gates and onto a weighing platform, the air thick with dust and the smell of manure. Bidders and spectators were arrayed in a circle in carpeted stands around the pen.

Auctioneer Terry Elson kept up his running patter as the lots of cattle came up for sale, trying his best to show off the animals’ attributes. He was well aware of the heartbreak of the moment — overseeing the emergency sales of livestock with bloodlines that these farmers had worked for generations to establish.

“You know why they’re here, you know the circumstances of the drought,” Elson told the crowd about one lot from a rancher in nearby Cambridge who was selling almost his entire herd. “You get the chance to bid for 90 heifers, they would make beautiful breeding heifers. ... They don’t have a fly on ‘em.”

Randel, his wife and youngest daughter Aleigh sat with some of his employees in the stands, watching their cattle come up for sale. When Elson hit the gavel for the final bid, Randel made \$1,043 for each steer and \$727 a piece for the heifers.

“One good thing about all this is that even though we had to sell, cattle prices have stayed good, so we got a pretty good price for them,” Randel said afterward.

Adrienne said she, too, was pleased, and confident they could make it through tough times.

“It’s not like there aren’t days when you go, ‘Really?’” she said. “But we’ve seen God’s faithfulness to us for years and years and generations. So that’s what gives you strength, you know this too shall pass.”

Besides, she said, every day that goes by is one day closer to the next rain.

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HEADLINE	10/04 WA job openings rapidly grew this summer
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/job-openings-in-wa-grew-rapidly-this-summer-thats-not-good-news/
GIST	<p>This summer, more companies posted job openings in Washington state than almost anywhere else in the U.S., indicating inflation is likely to persist as labor shortages continue.</p> <p>At the end of July, the state recorded 213,000 job openings with one of the highest month-over-month increase rates in the nation, according to the Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, a monthly report on hires, quits and other labor market flows produced by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.</p> <p>The data for July, released late last month, points to a rebound in job openings, which had been declining in Washington after peaking in February.</p>

The rise in job openings, coupled with record low unemployment, indicates that employers are likely struggling to staff up or retain workers. While that's good news for workers looking to switch jobs, it means businesses may continue to raise prices to afford the higher pay their employees can command in such a tight labor market.

"This goes hand-in-hand with what we've been seeing during the summer season, which has been typified by pretty strong hiring," said Paul Turek, state economist for the Employment Security Department. "It's basically demonstrating that we're continuing to have a very tight labor market and things are going to be sticky for a while."

Alongside an increase in openings, hiring rates in the state also grew from June to July. Other states reported better hiring rates than Washington.

Generally speaking, job openings and hirings in Washington state have lagged behind other states owing to a [cautious rebound in leisure and hospitality](#) establishments, according to the state Office of Financial Management.

Unemployment at an all-time low

At 3.7%, Washington's unemployment rate was at a record low in July, and preliminary data for August show the rate remained unchanged.

The rate covers the percentage of adults who are able to work but reported not having a job despite actively seeking one. It does not include adults who have given up looking for work or those who work part-time because they can't find a full-time job. The unemployment rate differs demographically — nationally, Black workers are [more than twice as likely to be unemployed](#) as white workers, and were the only group to report an increase in unemployment this summer.

The strength of the job market can be measured by the ratio of unemployed persons per job opening.

The lower the ratio, the closer the economy is to full employment, which is the highest level of employment the economy can sustain without generating unwelcome inflation. It describes an economy in which nearly everyone who is able to work has a job.

In July, there were 0.7 job seekers per job opening in Washington. The ratio has dropped significantly since last June, when there was one unemployed person for every job opening.

Workers are cautious about quitting

Fewer workers are leaving their jobs in the state as separation rates — or more specifically quit rates — are falling, after peaking in March. While "separations" cover employer-initiated involuntary layoffs and firings, quits are employee-initiated and voluntary.

Quit rates indicate workers' willingness or capacity to leave jobs and are helpful to measure the strength of a job market. A rising quit rate is a sign of a very strong job market.

At the end of July, 2.2% of Washington's workers quit, down from 2.4% in June. Though this is still on the higher end of the range for the state, the current quit rate is one of the lowest in the country.

"We're starting to see some caution enter on the side of employees," Turek said. "At the same time, we've also seen some strategies for businesses to retain their workers and give them less of a reason to quit."

Turek said employers and workers who are plugged into economic news are most cautious. The economic news in question is historic inflation and the threat of a recession.

Some workers may hang tight where they are because they worry that, if a recession arrives, new hires will be the first to be shown the door.

A strong labor market's role in inflation

When it comes to a strong job market, look past the tree and look at the forest, Turek said.

“If you just focus on the labor market, we’re taking one tree out of the economy and if that was the only tree we got, things will look awfully good,” he explained. “Jobs are plentiful, the unemployment rate is low, essentially pushing towards full employment, rising wages for workers, which, you know, looks good.”

Yet overall, it is not good news, Turek said. The more wages continue to grow, the more they contribute to inflation. Employers looking to maintain their profit margins while raising wages will pass costs back on to consumers.

He does not expect the summer surge in openings and hirings to continue. “It’s going to start tapering off, but we’ve got some ways to go for the labor market to unwind.”

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HEADLINE	10/04 Ukraine poised at doorstep Donbas region
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/04/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#three-months-after-a-defeat-ukraine-is-poised-at-the-doorstep-of-donbas
GIST	<p>Ukraine, fresh from a string of victories in the northeast, is now poised at the gateway to the eastern Donbas region and may have its best opportunity yet to dislodge Russian forces that expanded their control over the area after brutal combat this summer. Lysychansk, which only three months ago fell to the Russians in a demoralizing setback for Kyiv, could be the next major city in Ukraine’s sights.</p> <p>That a battle to retake Lysychansk is even conceivable shows just how much the tables have turned in the east in the few weeks since Ukraine launched a surprise counteroffensive in the northeastern Kharkiv region. The relative speed of its victories is a marked contrast to Russia’s grinding assault over the summer in Donbas.</p> <p>“The offensive movement of our army and all our defenders continued,” President Volodymyr Zelensky said in a bullish speech overnight, in which he said that 450 settlements in Kharkiv had been recaptured. “There are new liberated settlements in several regions.”</p> <p>“Fierce fighting continues in many areas of the front,” he said.</p> <p>Over the weekend, Ukraine reclaimed the town of Lyman, a strategic rail hub in the north of Donetsk, one of two territories that make up Donbas, and has continued to press east toward Lysychansk.</p> <p>To seize Lysychansk and its sister city of Sievierodonetsk — both of which lie in northern Luhansk, the other territory that comprises Donbas — Russian pounded Ukrainian forces with artillery for weeks before street-by-street fighting eventually forced Ukraine’s withdrawal. Before Lyman fell, Ukrainian soldiers gradually encircled the town, and it fell last week after just days of intense combat.</p> <p>Analysts point to Ukraine’s success in cutting off Russian supply routes as key to its momentum. As Russia was pushed out of Kharkiv last month, it lost control of its rail hub in the city of Iziium, making it much harder for Moscow to resupply its forces farther south in Donbas and leaving them vulnerable.</p> <p>Ukrainian soldiers have encountered hungry, poorly outfitted Russian troops, some with little weaponry to defend themselves.</p> <p>Russia’s military is likely to be faced with a decision about whether to shift resources from other parts of the front to slow Ukraine’s advance or risk losing more ground in Donbas. Some of the nearest Russian reinforcements are roughly 25 miles southeast of Lyman, around the Ukrainian-held city of Bakhmut. The Wagner Group, an infamous paramilitary unit that reports directly to the Kremlin, has battered the Ukrainian defenders there but failed to seize the city.</p>

But the question remains how long Ukrainian momentum can last. In recent days, some Ukrainian soldiers in Kharkiv Province have spoken of exhaustion after weeks of nonstop fighting.

Ben Barry, a senior fellow for land warfare at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, said that the advance would most likely reach a “culminating point” after which the offensive would be difficult to sustain because troops would need to be rotated and resupplied.

Ukraine’s gains have not eased the danger to civilians, as fighting continued to produce casualties. A convoy of people fleeing Svatove, in Luhansk, was attacked in recent days and 24 people, including 13 children, were killed, the Ukrainian authorities said. And on Monday, Russian shellfire at a hospital in the Kupiansk district of the Kharkiv region killed a doctor and wounded two nurses, according to the head of its military administration, Oleh Syniehubov.

Russia’s battlefield losses have come even as Moscow claims that four Ukrainian regions where fierce fighting is continuing are now part of Russia, a move that has been met with widespread international derision. Tass, a Russian state news agency, reported on Tuesday that the country’s upper house of Parliament, the Federation Council, had approved a law to annex Donetsk and Luhansk, as well as two provinces in southern Ukraine, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia.

President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia is likely to sign the law, which follows referendums in the provinces denounced as a sham by Ukraine and its Western partners.

Mr. Zelensky said on Tuesday that, given “Russia’s attempt to annex territories,” he had approved a decision of the country’s security council on the “impossibility of holding negotiations” with Mr. Putin.

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HEADLINE	10/04 Scenes of death after Russia’s retreat
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/04/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#as-ukraine-presses-its-offensive-in-the-east-the-horrors-of-war-linger-in-a-reclaimed-village
GIST	<p>PISKY-RADKIVSKI, Ukraine — The Russian soldier lay in the undergrowth, slammed against a tree. Still in full combat uniform with body armor and boots, he had been missed by the crews gathering the dead.</p> <p>A week after Ukrainian troops seized back the village of Pisky-Radkivski, in the Kharkiv region, in a sweeping counteroffensive that forced Russian troops into retreat across northeastern Ukraine, the horror of war was all too evident.</p> <p>“I cannot breathe in my house from the smell,” said Valentina Eliseeva, 73, a bent woman in slippers who pointed out where the soldier’s corpse lay. “The smell is so bad. When will they take it away?”</p> <p>The successful counteroffensive in northeastern Ukraine has reclaimed vast areas of territory, including Lyman, a crucial railway hub about 25 miles south of Pisky-Radkivski in Donetsk — one of the four regions of Ukraine that President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia said last week his country was annexing and treating as its own. On Monday, Russian forces were still on the retreat in the northeast while Ukrainian forces also reported progress in the south — adding to the Kremlin’s embarrassments as it faces unusually public criticism of its war effort at home.</p> <p>The battle lasted just one day in Pisky-Radkivski, but the power and accuracy of the Ukrainian assault was evident. Burned-out tanks sat still in their positions, at a crossroads and in the woods at the northern edge of the village. Russian uniforms, sleeping bags and rations lay abandoned among the fir trees opposite Ms. Eliseeva’s house.</p> <p>Ukrainian artillery knocked out the tanks and killed at least eight Russian soldiers here, said Anatolii, 52, a retired engineer whose house was damaged in the strikes. “It is a strategic crossroads,” he said. “They shelled all around us.”</p>

	<p>Most of the bodies had been removed by professional crews who tour the battle zone in white vans emblazoned with a red cross and the number 200, the code the military has used since Soviet times for cargo of dead soldiers. But they had not picked up the body by the tree, which was missing its head.</p> <p>On a road past several villages to the south, a forensic team was picking up Russian bodies at the scene of an ambush. A Ukrainian soldier protested, but the forensic team explained quietly that Russian bodies could be exchanged for Ukrainian soldiers. The soldier helped lift a decomposed body into a black body bag, then leaned over to retch in the grass.</p> <p>Down the road, soldiers from a Ukrainian tank crew pulled up near the body of another dead Russian soldier, who lay twisted where he had fallen, his face blackened and his body swollen.</p> <p>Weary and dirty, the tank crew showed little concern for the Russian bodies, but seemed tense and angry from their recent battles. They had been fighting for 51 days without a break and were still wearing their summer uniforms, said one of them, who gave his code name as Positiv.</p> <p>“We liberated four villages and planted the Ukrainian flag, but other units took the credit,” he said. “So many of our soldiers died,” he added. “So many young guys, 20-year-olds. So many.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 Freed Azov commanders emotional reunion
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/04/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#released-azov-commanders-have-an-emotional-reunion-with-family-members-in-turkey
GIST	<p>Commanders of Ukraine’s celebrated Azov Battalion have held an emotional reunion with their families in Turkey, Ukrainian officials said, honoring the fighters released from Russian confinement last month as part of the largest prisoner swap since the start of the war.</p> <p>Among the 215 Ukrainian prisoners of war released in the exchange were 108 members of the Azov Battalion. The group’s defense of the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol — the southern port city decimated by Russian forces in the first months of the war — has become a powerful symbol of the suffering inflicted by Russia and the resistance mounted by Ukraine.</p> <p>Under the terms of the swap, the commanders of the battalion must remain in Turkey — which brokered the exchange — until the war ends. After months of waiting, they were reunited with family members on Monday, according to a statement from the office of President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine and photographs distributed by the Ukrainian Presidential Press Service.</p> <p>“There are many emotions,” Ukraine’s first lady, Olena Zelenska, who attended the meeting, said in a post on Telegram. “The road to this moment was long and difficult. Finally they were able to hug.”</p> <p>While the Azov fighters were holed up inside the steel plant in the spring, facing withering Russian attacks, some of their wives helped lead an international campaign to end the fighting, appealing to world leaders and even earning an audience with Pope Francis at the Vatican. The last holdouts were taken captive by Russia in May, after the Ukrainian authorities declared an end to the combat mission there.</p> <p>The commander of the Azov Battalion, Lt. Col. Denis Prokopenko, and his deputy, Capt. Svyatoslav Palamar, were among the commanders released by Russia. In exchange, Ukraine freed 55 prisoners including Viktor Medvedchuk, a Ukrainian businessman and politician who is a close friend of Russia’s president, Vladimir V. Putin.</p> <p>Ms. Zelenska said she gave the Azov Battalion members “thanks from Ukraine, from the president and all the people for whom they are fighting.” But she emphasized in her statement that many Ukrainian prisoners of war remained in Russian hands.</p>

	“And we need each and every one. Alive,” she wrote.
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HEADLINE	10/04 NKorea supports Russia illegal annexation
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/04/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#north-korea-supports-russias-illegal-claim-to-ukrainian-land
GIST	<p>SEOUL — No country, even among Russia’s traditional allies, has recognized President Vladimir V. Putin’s illegal declaration of four territories of Ukraine to be part of Russia — except North Korea.</p> <p>Sham referendums in Ukraine’s east and south, intended to give Mr. Putin a veneer of legitimacy to annex the four regions, have been widely denounced by leaders in Ukraine and the West, including President Biden. But Mr. Putin has found a supporter in North Korea, which on Tuesday said it backed the purported outcome, becoming the only country to do so besides Russia itself.</p> <p>“We respect the will of the residents who aspired toward the integration into Russia,” the North Korean Foreign Ministry said in a statement, “and support the Russian government’s stand of making the above-said regions components of Russia.”</p> <p>Russia orchestrated the votes last month in Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson, regions in the south and east of Ukraine where intense fighting was still underway. While the referendums purported to put voters’ stamp of approval on joining Russia, many ballots were cast at the point of a gun, according to witnesses.</p> <p>On Tuesday, North Korea also accused the United States of interfering with the internal affairs of other countries, calling it “highhanded and arbitrary,” and of abusing the United Nations Security Council to maintain its power. The council has passed several resolutions imposing sanctions on the North for developing nuclear weapons. On Friday, it also voted on a resolution, vetoed by Russia, condemning the claimed annexations.</p> <p>North Korea has been one of Russia’s few allies throughout the invasion of Ukraine. Along with Eritrea, Syria and Belarus, it voted in March against a U.N. resolution condemning the Russian invasion. American intelligence also showed that North Korea had provided artillery to Russia in a report that the North has denied.</p> <p>North Korea, which fired a missile over Japan on Tuesday, has faced fewer penalties for its military provocations since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. In 2017, the Security Council agreed that sanctions on the North were warranted. But rising tensions have prevented a united front, including in May, when Russia vetoed a resolution that would have tightened sanctions on North Korea as punishment over its launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 Businesses brace currency chaos in Asia
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/04/business/asia-currency-dollar.html
GIST	<p>Tigun Wibisana and Sandra Kok, who own a cafe in Malaysia, are facing an excruciating decision that could make or break their business of 14 years: Can they increase prices to cover rising expenses without driving customers into the arms of their bigger rivals?</p> <p>The cost of the coffee beans that the couple, who are married, buy is spiraling because they are traded globally in U.S. dollars, and the Malaysian ringgit has fallen to a 24-year low. Compound that with an inflationary spike in prices for butter and flour, essential ingredients for its pastries, and the shop’s profits have plunged more than 25 percent this year.</p> <p>“Eventually we may have to raise prices to survive, but I don’t have the guts to do it now,” said Mr. Wibisana, 65, who roasts the beans and makes the baked goods.</p>

Their cafe, SiTigun on Penang Island, is one of many businesses in Asia that are being squeezed by the strength of the dollar, which has soared to record levels this year. America's currency is used extensively to buy and sell goods [around the world](#), and its hypervalue is exacerbating the pain of surging prices for energy and other imports caused by the war in Ukraine and the pandemic.

Throughout Asia, from the Vietnamese dong to the Philippine peso, currencies are tumbling to record lows, the type of widespread currency weakness not seen since the [1997 financial crisis](#). That has unnerved businesses and policymakers who recall how a string of Asian currencies folded under the pressure of a strong dollar.

To minimize the risk of that kind of calamity, policymakers are scrambling to stabilize their currencies. The State Bank of Vietnam [raised interest rates](#) by a full percentage point last month after Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh implored the central bank to act. The dong had fallen for nine straight days to a 29-year low.

The same day Vietnam raised interest rates, Japan, where the yen has dropped around 25 percent against the dollar this year, [announced it would intervene to strengthen its currency](#) for the first time since 1998. In China, where the renminbi is [trading near 14-year lows](#), the central bank has taken a series of measures to slow the currency's depreciation, including [warning speculators against making bets](#) on it.

Heightening the alarm, the dollar — powered by the most rapid Federal Reserve interest rate increases in decades — shows no signs of slowing. It is up nearly 20 percent against a group of major currencies from a year ago.

In Asia, the trouble facing local currencies has resurfaced the collective trauma of 25 years ago, when excitement over the region's dazzling growth became a crisis seemingly overnight.

The chaos started in Thailand when the country's central bank ran out of the dollars it was using to keep its own currency stable and back its loans. It quickly spread to South Korea, Indonesia and other countries as they struggled to cushion their falling currencies. Speculators who had charged into the region en masse expecting huge returns retreated just as quickly.

By the end of 1997, the International Monetary Fund had arranged more than \$100 billion worth of support for Thailand, Indonesia and South Korea to prevent their financial systems from collapsing. The next year, the economies of the countries at the heart of the crisis retreated sharply: 13.7 percent in Indonesia, 9.7 percent in Thailand, 6.7 percent in Malaysia and 5.8 percent in South Korea. Governments struggled with corporate bankruptcies and political instability.

"It was very insulting, humiliating and devastating, and I think the region will never forget it," said Hoe Ee Khor, chief economist at ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office, known as AMRO, a group that supports the Chiang Mai Initiative, an agreement among Asian countries to pool funds to help one another in a cash crisis. "But because of that, they were determined to never let it happen again, and they took the painful medicine to reform."

Most economists and financial market analysts believe there is little risk that a similar crisis will spread across the region. At least not yet. Asian economies are fundamentally stronger than before, they say, and the painful lessons learned from the meltdown spurred them to build financial systems designed to prevent future collapses.

Countries have undergone several major changes that have made their economies much less susceptible to a strong dollar than they were in the late 1990s. For one thing, they have much less debt borrowed in dollars: The size of local currency bond markets in 10 Southeast Asian countries, plus Japan, China and South Korea, is about 123 percent of their collective gross domestic product, compared with 74 percent in 2000, according to AMRO.

Many Asian central banks that used to keep their exchange rates in line with the greenback now allow them to fluctuate with market forces. While that means more volatile exchange rates, it also relieves some pent-up pressure that can trigger a collapse.

And most Asian countries have more foreign currency coming in than going out, allowing them to sock away significant reserves that they can deploy in an emergency to supplement imports or protect their own currency from depreciating.

As a result, Asia today is “in much better shape than any other region in the world,” said Sayuri Shira, a professor of economics at Keio University and former member of the Bank of Japan’s policy board.

Still, the strong dollar is testing the region’s defenses, forcing central banks to use their war chests to prop up their currencies — mainly by buying their own currencies and selling dollars. India and Thailand have spent more than 10 percent of their reserves on interventions this year, spending \$75 billion and \$27 billion in the foreign exchange markets, according to estimates from Nomura Holdings.

Companies are having to adapt as falling currencies blow up their supply chains and put pressure on their profits.

Suh Jin, an executive at Mirage Furniture on the outskirts of Seoul, said the company imports \$15 million to \$20 million worth of home furnishings in an average year. But Mirage Furniture, which buys most of its products from Vietnam with U.S. dollars, has had to cut its imports by 10 percent since May because of the weakening won, which is trading near 13-year lows against the U.S. dollar.

While South Korea was able to emerge from the 1997 financial crisis fairly quickly, Mr. Suh said, he is worried that the company may have to lay off staff if the strong dollar and high inflation persist.

“We fear that the current situation will last longer,” he said.

The strong dollar has affected even businesses that rarely use it.

Classic Japan, a flower importer in Tokyo, had long paid its South East Asian vendors in yen. But sellers hungry for valuable dollars have begun offering their merchandise elsewhere, making it difficult to obtain some rare flowers, such as orchids.

“Domestic production is falling, so we want to import more,” said Kio Nishio, the company’s president. But the current situation has made that difficult, he said.

Some companies, of course, can benefit from a strong dollar, which can lift corporate bottom lines in countries like South Korea that are heavily export focused. In Japan, trading companies and major manufacturers like Toyota that have substantial overseas business have gotten a healthy profit boost from assets and earnings held in dollars.

At the SiTigun cafe in Malaysia, the full impact of the weak ringgit will not be felt until months from now, when the next crop of beans has worked its way through farmers and middlemen to their coffee pots.

“The pandemic has already affected many businesses, and then inflation came as another challenge,” said Ms. Kok, who manages the shop. “But inflation and currency hits everyone. How do we survive?”

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HEADLINE	10/04 Analyzing video footage of Iran protests
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/04/world/asia/iran-protest-video-analysis.html
GIST	Protests erupted in more than 80 cities across Iran following the death of Mahsa Amini, known by her first Kurdish surname Jina, after her detention by the morality police under the so-called hijab law. Footage of

the demonstrations posted to social media has become one of the primary windows into what is happening on the ground and revealed what is different about this latest show of resistance inside Iran.

The New York Times analyzed dozens of videos and spoke with experts who have followed the country's protest movements to understand what insights the often blurry, pixelated footage contains about what is propelling the demonstrations.

Attacking Symbols of the State

Now in their third week, protests have continued even as dozens of people have been killed. Many of the videos appeared on social media during the first week of the protests, before Iran's government began limiting internet access in an effort to silence dissent.

Multiple videos show a consistent theme of protesters attacking structures and symbols that represent Iran's government, in some cases setting fire to municipal structures. In the northern city of Amol, demonstrators set fires in the complex of the governorate building, and elsewhere took down portraits of the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and the founding leader of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Reza H. Akbari, a program manager for the Middle East and North Africa at the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, said that targeting state symbols is a response in part to the government's failure to engage with civil society. Following a national uprising in 2009, the government weakened grass roots organizations, like labor unions and student groups, which were outlets for citizens to discuss their grievances and engage with policymakers. That segment of society, he said, "does not have that many options left than to resort to violent attacks on security and administrative buildings."

He added that while the targeting of such buildings isn't new, the widespread nature of the attacks is noteworthy.

Iran's security forces have a history of using violence and brutality to suppress dissent. In many instances, authorities have shot protesters on the streets. Amnesty International has said that [at least 52 people](#) have been killed since the start of the protests, noting that the death toll is likely much higher. Videos capture men in military fatigues using Kalashnikov-type assault rifles in protest areas, as well as the sound of sustained bursts of automatic rifle fire breaking up crowds.

One of the latest examples surfaced online Friday, from protests in the southeastern city of Zahedan. Automatic rifle fire [can be heard](#) disrupting prayers at a nearby local mosque, and [one video](#) shows a number of apparently injured and bleeding men being tended to outside.

In the past, the families of those killed by security forces have been intimidated by the authorities into keeping quiet. But this latest round of protests has seen [videos](#) of funeral services uploaded online showing displays of public mourning, such as a woman cutting her hair over a coffin.

Narges Bajoghli, an assistant professor of Middle East Studies at Johns Hopkins University, noted how similar public mourning rituals for those killed in the 1979 Islamic Revolution were key to support for the revolution's success. Now, spreading widely online, these scenes help boost antigovernment sentiment, she said.

"They're grieving over their children being so senselessly murdered," she said. "And that is now circulating online among Iranians. And so it creates even more grief, more rage but also more solidarity."

Women in the Lead

Across Iran, videos show that women are most often [at the forefront](#) of the recent demonstrations, rallying crowds of both women and men by engaging in symbolic acts of defiance. One of these acts, women burning their hijabs, has become a dominant theme of the protests, representing both solidarity with Ms. Amini and pushback against the mandatory wearing of hijabs, one of the most visible symbols of the repression of women under the Islamic Republic.

The large number of women leading the protests “in so many of the videos that we see, we saw that in 2009, too,” said Dr. Bajoghli, referring to the 2009 uprising in Iran. “But here the numbers seem to be much greater.”

Mr. Akbari of the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, pointed to videos showing women cutting off their hair in public, or on social media, as unique to the current demonstrations. “It’s a very powerful gesture of Iranian women almost sarcastically and bitterly stating that: ‘If it’s the hair that is bothering you — if it’s the hair you want — here you go,’” he said.

Beyond the now viral clips of hijab burning and hair cutting, footage of the demonstrations also reveals new ways in which common protest language has become centered on women. Dr. Bajoghli noted the adaptation of a well-known chant, used in past protest movements, from “I will defend my brother” to “I will defend my sister.”

Another chant — originating with [Kurdish female fighters](#) and the Kurdish feminist movement — is now heard in videos from nearly every major protest across the country: “Women. Life. Freedom.”

Videos also show women in direct, physical confrontation with security forces, not only putting themselves at the forefront of demonstrations, but physically pushing back against the police when challenged.

“The big willingness to put your body on the line and to say, ‘I’m coming at you and I’m going to fight you with my own body’ — that I haven’t seen,” said Dr. Bajoghli. “And that, I think, is what is causing this to be so difficult for the state to deal with.”

Widespread Solidarity

The Times’ analysis of videos posted to social media also reveals how the current protests are widespread geographically, ethnically and among various social classes.

“We haven’t seen national protests at this level and with this many folks that we would traditionally categorize as the middle class since 2009,” said Dr. Bajoghli. “And so now we’re seeing it again, but we’re seeing it in a new generation that’s doing it, and we’re seeing it link up with smaller towns across the country and with people who are not from the middle class.”

Footage has emerged from some of the country’s most religiously conservative cities like Qom, and its southern islands, as well as ethnic minority areas like Oshnavieh, which is home to Kurdish-Iranians.

Experts also found it noteworthy that the nationwide protests were sparked by the death of a woman from the Kurdish ethnic minority — signaling a new solidarity between disparate regions of the country. In one video from Iran’s capital, Tehran, the Kurdish feminist chant: “Women, Life, Freedom” — is said in its original Kurdish language, and not translated into Persian, the primary language used throughout most of the country.

“The Kurdish areas in the country have actually witnessed a lot of protests and there’s been a lot of tension there,” said Mr. Akbari. “But I think what’s powerful with this cycle is how the issue is a crosscutting matter for all walks of life and all ethnic backgrounds in the country.”

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HEADLINE	10/04 NKorea uses old playbook in new world
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/03/world/asia/japan-north-korea-missile.html
GIST	TOKYO — The alarms began bleating from cellphones, radios and public speakers across northern Japan. It was 7:30 on Tuesday morning as residents were warned that North Korea had fired a missile over the country for the first time in five years, and that they should seek shelter.

“You can’t ever get used to that sound,” said Kazuyuki Tsuchiya, 72, who runs a small village inn on Hokkaido, the northernmost island of Japan. “It makes me feel so scared.”

Over the course of the year, North Korea’s [missile provocations](#) have become so frequent — 23 weapons tests since January, including four last week — that much of the public had ceased to pay attention. But Tuesday’s flyover, with alarm bells rousing residents from their sleep, reminded them of the rogue nuclear threat in a region already unsettled by [China’s recent military drills near Taiwan](#).

Similar alarms sounded in Japan in 2017, a year when Kim Jong-un, the leader of North Korea, seemed intent on conflict. But the international landscape has changed considerably since then. A less mercurial president is in the White House, and the world is preoccupied by [Russia’s war in Ukraine](#), with President Vladimir V. Putin issuing a veiled threat to [use tactical nuclear weapons](#). The global economy is struggling with energy shortages, inflation and the effects of a long coronavirus pandemic. Both China and Russia are less likely to cooperate with the United Nations on sanctions.

Against this backdrop, Pyongyang has struggled to reclaim a place in the spotlight, launching missile after missile with near impunity as Washington repeats its offer to return to the negotiating table while keeping its sights trained mostly on Moscow and Beijing.

Tuesday’s launch of an intermediate range ballistic missile flew about 2,800 miles, the longest distance ever traveled by a North Korean weapon, according to officials in Tokyo and Seoul. The missile reached an altitude of 602 miles, according to South Korean officials. Its trajectory indicated that it was more powerful than the Hwasong-12, an intermediate-range ballistic missile that North Korea tested in 2017. That range suggested the missile could reach Guam, the tiny American territory in the Western Pacific that North Korea threatened to attack with an “enveloping fire” five years ago.

When North Korea tested a similar missile in 2017, President Donald J. Trump [sent B-1B](#) supersonic bombers and other warplanes close to North Korea, and called Mr. Kim a “[Rocket Man](#)” on “a [suicide mission](#).” Mr. Kim responded with [a test launch](#) of an intercontinental ballistic missile that he said was capable of delivering a nuclear warhead to the continental United States.

North Korea appears to be following a similar playbook to the one it used in 2017, when Mr. Trump promised to [unleash “fire and fury”](#) against the isolated country and Mr. Kim detonated an underground nuclear bomb. Analysts and government officials in Tokyo, Seoul and Washington are now bracing for yet another nuclear test, but their response has been more muted.

Although the office of President Yoon Suk Yeol of South Korea said that North Korea’s continuous provocations “would not be ignored” and that Pyongyang would “have to pay a price,” the ability to punish North Korea is more limited, partly because of resistance from China and Russia, both veto-wielding members of the United Nations Security Council.

After North Korea resumed intercontinental ballistic missile tests in March, Washington put forward a new U.N. resolution that would impose more sanctions on North Korea, but the effort was scuttled by China and Russia.

Experts said a quieter approach to North Korean aggression may be warranted.

“We should not directly react. We have to be calm,” said Noboru Yamaguchi, a professor of international relations at the International University of Japan in Niigata and a retired lieutenant general in Japan’s army, known as the Ground Self-Defense Force. “Otherwise we are doing what North Korea wants us to do, and we don’t want to do that.”

The intermediate-range missile on Tuesday was fired from Mupyong-ri, near North Korea’s central border with China, according to the South Korean military. It was launched at 7:22 a.m. and landed in the Pacific Ocean 22 minutes later, Japan’s chief cabinet minister, Hirokazu Matsuno, said. It crashed about 1,864

miles — or 3,000 kilometers — east of the archipelago, outside Japan's exclusive economic zone, which extends 200 nautical miles from its shores.

Mr. Tsuchiya, the inn owner in Hokkaido, was eating breakfast with a guest when the alarms sounded. But he could not think how he might heed the warnings to evacuate to a safe shelter. "There is nothing I can do," he said. "The government says 'evacuate,' but to where? There are not strong buildings here in the village. There is nowhere to escape."

The test on Tuesday may have been a direct challenge to South Korea's recent moves to strengthen its alliance with the United States and improve ties with Japan, a former colonial ruler that holds [longstanding historical disputes](#) with Seoul.

North Korea has accused the United States and its allies of plotting to invade the isolated country. In a speech to Parliament last month, Mr. Kim hardened his country's nuclear doctrine by saying that North Korea would never give up its nuclear weapons as long as the United States and South Korea continued to carry out joint military drills.

In response to the launch, four South Korean F-15K jets and four United States Air Force F-16 jets conducted a joint drill, firing two bombs at a target off the west coast of South Korea on Tuesday afternoon. The exercise demonstrated the allies' ability to make precision strikes at North Korean missile launch sites.

During an Armed Forces Day ceremony in Seoul on Saturday, South Korea released footage that showed a ballistic missile intended to [penetrate underground bunkers](#) where Mr. Kim and other North Korean leaders would most likely take shelter in times of war. In recent weeks, the United States, Japan and South Korea have conducted their first trilateral anti-submarine and missile-tracking exercises since 2017 in a show of force that may have prompted the North Korean escalation.

Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken held separate calls with Japan's foreign minister, Yoshimasa Hayashi, and South Korea's foreign minister, Park Jin, assuring both envoys of Washington's "ironclad" commitment to the region, according to Ned Price, the State Department spokesman.

Mr. Hayashi told Mr. Blinken that Japan was "determined" to strengthen its defense capability. Tokyo and Seoul have increasingly recognized the need to shore up their own deterrent power, rather than relying on their alliance with the United States alone.

The North Korean missile alerts on Tuesday will certainly help lawmakers in Japan "who are advocating for a big increase in the defense budget and a more proactive defense policy," said Narushige Michishita, professor of international relations at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies in Tokyo.

The last time a North Korean missile flew over Japan was on Sept. 15, 2017, when the country launched its intermediate-range ballistic missile, the Hwasong-12. The missile flew 2,300 miles, crashing into waters 1,370 miles east of Hokkaido.

Washington and Seoul have been warning for months that North Korea was preparing for another nuclear test. Under multiple resolutions at the United Nations, North Korea is banned from developing or testing ballistic missiles, as well as nuclear weapons.

Experts have suggested that Pyongyang would wait until after China's Communist Party Congress in mid-October to conduct its next nuclear test, but there was little doubt that Mr. Kim was in the midst of a serious escalation.

"The Kim regime is developing weapons such as tactical nuclear warheads and submarine-launched ballistic missiles as part of a long-term strategy to outrun South Korea in an arms race and drive wedges among U.S. allies," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor of international studies at Ewha Womans University in Seoul.

	<p>In northern Japan, residents soldiered on after the jolt of the morning.</p> <p>Wataru Yamazaki, 29, was working at a port in Hachinohe, in Aomori prefecture on the northeastern coast of Japan's main island, when the alarm went off on his cellphone. He immediately confirmed the safety of four ferries owned by the company where he works.</p> <p>Mr. Yamazaki said he believed that Japan's defense equipment would protect the archipelago. "I thought the chance is very rare that a missile would directly hit Japan," he said. "So I didn't worry so much."</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 Iran arrests musician for protest anthem
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/oct/04/iran-arrests-musician-anthem-iran-protests-viral-mahsa-amini-shervin-hajipour-baraye
GIST	<p>As demonstrations against the death of Mahsa Amini enter their third week in Iran, a protest song by one of Iran's most popular musicians has become the soundtrack to the biggest civil uprising for decades, channelling the rage of Iranians at home and abroad.</p> <p>The lyrics to Baraye by Shervin Hajipour are taken entirely from messages that Iranians have posted online about why they are protesting. Each begins with the word Baraye – meaning "For ..." or "Because of ..." in Farsi.</p> <p>Hajipour released the song online last week and it quickly went viral, being viewed millions of times across various platforms. Videos show the song being sung by schoolgirls in Iran, blared from car windows in Tehran and played at solidarity protests in Washington, Strasbourg and London this weekend.</p> <p>Hajipour, 25, was reportedly arrested on 29 September, days after the song was released. According to messages posted on Twitter by Hajipour's sister and reverified by Human Rights Watch, the intelligence services in Mazandaran province called Hajipour's parents and informed them of his arrest on 1 October.</p> <p>Sources close to Hajipour believe the singer was made to remove the song from Instagram when he was arrested. It has since been registered as having been written by someone else, allowing copyright infringement complaints to be made, resulting in the song being removed by platforms it had been uploaded to. However, the song has already been widely shared and continues to be uploaded by users on YouTube.</p> <p>"This [song] has broken Persian social media tonight. So many of us have cried listening to it over and over. The artist Shervin Hajipour has summed up the deep national sadness and pain Iranians have been feeling for decades, culminating in the tragedy of #MahsaAmini," BBC correspondent Bahman Kalbasi said.</p> <p>"The single best way to understand Iran's uprising is not any book or essay, but Shervin Hajipour's 'Baraye'," wrote Karim Sadjadpour, of thinktank Carnegie Endowment. "Its profundity requires multiple views."</p> <p>A campaign is under way calling on the public to nominate the song for a Grammy in the best song for social change category.</p> <p>In the song, Hajipour sings lyrics such as, "For dancing in the streets, for kissing loved ones" and "for women, life, freedom", a chant synonymous with the wave of protests following Amini's death.</p> <p>Amini was travelling with her family from Iran's western province of Kurdistan to the capital, Tehran, on 13 September to visit relatives when she was arrested for failing to meet the country's strict rules on</p>

women's dress. Witnesses reported that Amini [was beaten in the police van](#), an allegation the police deny. Amini, 22, was taken to hospital in a coma and died two days later.

But the lyrics to Baraye reflect widespread anger and misery, just as Amini's death was the tipping point for many after the regime engaged in a concerted crackdown on alleged anti-Islamic activity. Enforcement has included the heightened presence of guidance patrol – also known as morality police – on the streets.

One lyric – “For the missing murdered kids” – was posted with an image of Hamed Esmaeilion with his 9-year-old daughter, Reera. She was killed alongside her mother, Parisa, on [Ukraine International Airlines flight 752](#), which was shot down by Iran's Revolutionary Guards shortly after takeoff from Tehran airport in January 2020. Esmaeilion was one of the lead organisers behind the global protests that took place this weekend.

There have been further arrests across Iran as protests continue, including football player Hossein Mahini, who was arrested after expressing his support for the protests online, and poet Mona Borzoi, after she wrote a poem in support of the protests, according to [Hrana](#), an Iranian human rights news agency.

In [a statement](#), Iran Human Rights, a Norway-based group, said “so far, 133 people had been killed across Iran”, including more than 40 people who it said died in clashes last week in Zahedan, capital of the south-eastern Sistan-Baluchistan province.

Sadjadpour said: “No matter what happens to the protests it's worth noting the most viral song in Iran's history, likely to be remembered for decades to come, isn't about resistance to America or Israel or anywhere else. It's a song about Iranian dreams for a normal life.”

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HEADLINE	10/05 Russia concedes big losses in south
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/05/europe/ukraine-conflict-russia-losses-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Russian forces appear to be buckling under growing pressure as Ukraine continues to regain territory in the south, where Russian soldiers have been forced to retreat from previously-held settlements as Kyiv progresses with its counteroffensive towards the Russian-occupied city of Kherson.</p> <p>A map used by the Russian Defense Ministry in its daily briefing on Tuesday confirmed significant Russian losses in Kherson – one of four Ukrainian regions Moscow is attempting to annex – compared to a map of the same area used in a ministry briefing a day before.</p> <p>The map confirms reports from Ukrainian and pro-Russian officials, as well as pro-Russian military analysts, of significant Ukrainian gains towards Kherson, down the western bank of the Dnieper River.</p> <p>Lieutenant General Igor Konashenkov, who spoke while the map was shown full-screen, did not mention the losses. However, he said that Russian military destroyed Ukrainian armor and killed Ukrainian forces in the area of several towns that are now understood to be under Ukrainian control – a tacit acknowledgment of Kyiv's push.</p> <p>Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky praised the military for their “fast and powerful advances” in his Tuesday evening address, before celebrating that “dozens of settlements have already been liberated” this week.</p> <p>In Kherson region, he said that Liubymivka, Khreshchenivka, Zolota Balka, Biliivka, Ukraiinka, Velyka, Mala Oleksandrivka, and Davydiv Brid had all been reclaimed, “and this is not a complete list.”</p> <p>“Our warriors do not stop. And it is only a matter of time when we will expel the occupier from all our land,” the president added.</p>

Despite losing territory in the south to Ukrainian military at rapid pace, Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday signed several laws ratifying the Russian Federation's claimed annexation of four Ukrainian regions – Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson.

Donetsk and Luhansk are both in eastern Ukraine, and fighting against Moscow-backed breakaway republics in each region has been raging since 2014. Kherson and Zaporizhzhia are in southern Ukraine and have been occupied by Russian forces since shortly after the invasion began in late February.

The annexations are illegal under international law. World leaders have said they are the result of “sham” referendums that will never be recognized.

Russia does not have full control of the regions it claims to have seized. In addition to Ukraine's successes in the south, Kyiv's forces made gains in Luhansk on Monday and liberated the [strategic city of Lyman](#) on Sunday, a key operational hub in Donetsk which the Russian army had used to funnel troops and supplies to the west and south.

The Russian Defense Ministry said it was forced to cede Lyman or risk encirclement of its troops there, allowing Ukrainian forces to potentially use the city as a staging post to push troops further east.

Positive spin

The Russian-appointed deputy leader in the occupied Kherson region explained Ukraine's rapid advance in recent days by saying that the Russian military was “regrouping.”

“The Russian army is conducting maneuvers,” Kirill Stremousov told Russian state news RIA Novosti. “The regrouping of the front in the current conditions allows us to gather strength and strike.”

The phrase “regrouping” was also used by the Russian Defense Ministry in September to describe the retreat of the Russian military in response to Ukraine's offensive that recaptured the key city of Iziurm, in the Kharkiv region.

Stremousov on Wednesday claimed that Ukraine's advance had been stopped, and that it was “impossible” for them to enter the occupied city of Kherson.

However, pro-Russian media has been uncommonly critical of the war effort in recent days, delivering gloomy reports that Russia's campaign is suffering an operational crisis while Ukraine takes advantage on the battlefield.

“In the Kherson region, we have lost 17 settlements,” Alexander Sladkov, a leading Russian war correspondent, conceded on state TV Tuesday, before placing the blame on “fat” US weapons deliveries and “intelligence gathered via satellite reconnaissance.”

Sladkov is just one of several Russian correspondents in recent days to convey the losses Russia is suffering. Alexander Kots, a correspondent for pro-Kremlin tabloid Komsomolskaya Pravda, who was embedded with Russian forces in Lyman, told his Telegram followers earlier Tuesday that the military was in “operational crisis.” Meanwhile, state media reporter Evgeniy Poddubnyy said that “for the time being it will become even harder.”

Sladkov, for his part, tried to put a positive spin on things.

“This doesn't mean that we've collapsed like a house of cards. These mistakes aren't gigantic strategic failures. We are still learning. I know this is hard to hear in our eighth month of the special operation. But we are reporters. We are waiting for reinforcements.

Sladkov continued: “If we were to throw [our soldiers] into the battle now, forgive me, but we must show compassion to our soldiers. They should be properly trained in order to feel confident in the battlefield.

	<p>Even if we had these 300,000 to sent to the front lines in the beginning, we would have lost them as well. But now we know that our soldiers must be properly trained.”</p> <p>Host Olga Skabeeva appeared visibly angry, before asking Sladkov if the entire Kherson region was in danger of being lost.</p> <p>“We don’t have enough troops at the moment to move on Kyiv or to quickly take Kharkiv, but they are sufficient to continue protecting the territories that we are already protecting,” he responded. “In straightening out our front line, we’ve had to retreat from these settlements.”</p> <p>It was the second such shocking admission by Sladkov in less than a month on the Russian TV program, after he previously admitted that Russian forces had endured heavy losses on September 13, a Tuesday. At the beginning of this Tuesday’s interview, Sladkov quipped: “I only tell the truth on Tuesdays, and for other days I just make everything up.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/03 Puerto Rico: need hurricane aid, not words
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/puerto-rico-hurricane-survivors-remain-hopeful-skeptical-bidens-visit-rcna50472
GIST	<p>President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden finished a three-hour visit to hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico on Monday evening, leaving residents with mixed feelings about whether it will make a difference in speeding up the island's recovery.</p> <p>Mercedita International Airport in Ponce, where the Bidens landed, was submerged under brown water just two weeks ago when Hurricane Fiona brought heavy rains that caused a nearby river to burst out of its bank and flood the area with 6 feet of water.</p> <p>It also flooded the Central Mercedita community a few minutes north of the airport, stranding people for days.</p> <p>The community of nearly 200 families has not had electricity since Sept. 18, when an islandwide blackout was reported about an hour before Hurricane Fiona’s eye entered the southwestern coast.</p> <p>Gerardo Manuel Robles, Central Mercedita's community leader, said families are spending \$30 to \$50 daily to buy fuel to power their generators. Fallen trees and blue tarps sit on top of many destroyed homes. "This is literally two minutes from where the president landed," Robles said in Spanish.</p> <p>After they landed, the Bidens went to the Port of Ponce, where the president met with Puerto Rico Gov. Pedro Pierluisi and other officials and delivered a speech renewing his commitment to assist the U.S. territory in its recovery.</p> <p>“You deserve every bit of help your country can give you,” Biden said. “That’s what I’m determined to do.”</p> <p>The Bidens later visited the Sor Isolina Ferré relief center in Ponce, where they briefly met with community leaders and families affected by the hurricane.</p> <p>Puerto Rican residents like Ileana Vargas of Cabo Rojo, where Fiona made landfall, said they wished the Bidens had spent more time visiting other communities and meeting with more residents so they could see firsthand how many areas were devastated and still remain without electricity.</p> <p>"He had no contact with the people," Vargas said in Spanish, "but we'll see what aid will be sent to the island."</p> <p>Still, said Laura Domenech, a resident of Ponce, his presence on the island was significant.</p>

"I think it's very important that he did come," said Domenech, a senior medical officer at the Ponce Medical School Foundation. "For us, it's really important that he made some remarks about sending us funds for restoration."

The president's visit coincides with the approval of [\\$60 million in additional aid](#) to shore up levees, strengthen flood walls and create a new flood warning system ahead of future storms.

Robles is hopeful about the additional money, because it could prevent future floods in his community. However, he is skeptical about the government's ability to use the aid in a timely manner, saying money assigned for similar purposes after Hurricane Maria in 2017 has not been put to use.

[Close to \\$155 million](#) in emergency individual and public assistance for residents affected by Fiona has been made available to Puerto Rico. So far, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has approved [more than 200,000](#) individual assistance applications on the island, allowing people to receive \$700 "to help cover the essentials for just a little while," Biden said.

"Seven hundred dollars won't replace what you lost, not even close, but it can help take care of some of the basics while you catch your breath and get back on your feet," he added.

Biden's trip comes exactly five years after [President Donald Trump's infamous visit](#) to the island, where he threw paper towels at a crowd of Hurricane Maria survivors.

Jorge Schmidt Nieto, a political science professor at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez, remembers Trump's visit as "a cruel one," because he told the governor at the time that Puerto Rico was not enduring a real disaster — even though Hurricane Maria became the [deadliest natural disaster in U.S. territory in 100 years](#).

"That's why I said Biden is doing what any other president would've done," Schmidt Nieto, who lives in Cabo Rojo, said in Spanish. "But because Trump set such a low standard, the fact that Biden is not coming here to mock us feels like a big deal."

While the Trump administration approved billions of dollars to help Puerto Rico rebuild after Maria, [much of that aid was withheld](#), effectively delaying the island's reconstruction process. Under Biden, restrictions previously used to withhold the funds were lifted.

"We're going to make sure you get every single dollar promised," Biden said. "I'm determined to help Puerto Rico build faster than in the past and stronger and better prepared for the future."

Hurricane Maria caused \$90 billion in damage. Congress allocated at least \$71 billion for general recovery and reconstruction operations, of which \$62 billion has been made available to the island. About 72% of the funds have not yet reached local communities, mainly because permanent reconstruction work on the island began in late 2020.

Officials are still assessing Fiona's damage, but FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell expects it to reach billions.

In August, [FEMA made \\$9.5 billion](#) available to rebuild Puerto Rico's power grid after Maria. On Monday, Biden promised to add more aid and to invest additional resources to ensure "the Puerto Rican people can get clean, reliable, affordable power" after Fiona.

Based on data provided by Luma Energy, the private company in charge of power transmission and distribution, government officials insist that power has been restored to 93% of customers in Puerto Rico after Fiona.

But residents like Vargas and Schmidt Nieto find that hard to believe.

	<p>"When I hear that nearly 90% of Puerto Rico has power, it feels like having toilet paper thrown at my face. I'm sure that comment doesn't sit well with the more than 100,000 people still without power," Schmidt Nieto said. "It leaves this impression that things are improving when, in fact, things in a big part of the island are still the same."</p> <p>Vargas agreed, adding that most of her colleagues at a hospital in the nearby town of San German still do not have power. Residents in other parts of the island have also reported having unreliable power access since their electricity was restored.</p> <p>"The worst damage is currently being caused by the lack of electricity, and I did not see President Biden with an attitude of putting pressure on the company that has to solve that problem," Schmidt Nieto said.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 AAA warns 'brace for rising pump prices'
SOURCE	https://www.foxbusiness.com/politics/americans-should-prepare-gas-prices-keep-rising-analysts-warn
GIST	<p>American consumers should expect gasoline prices to keep surging as a result of various domestic and global factors, according to energy analysts who spoke with FOX Business.</p> <p>Major petroleum refinery snags and policies disincentivizing more fossil fuel production or nationwide refinery capacity have contributed to the price uptick, the analysts said. In addition, the powerful Middle East oil cartel the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and Russia are expected to announce a massive production cut of up to 1-2 million barrels per day on Wednesday, Reuters reported.</p> <p>"What OPEC might do very much could dictate where we go by the end of the year," Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy, told FOX Business in an interview.</p> <p>"I had expected at least a good potential that the national average could fall under \$3 a gallon, but I think OPEC just threw a bucket of cold water on that by signaling its intentions to be well ahead of any economic slowdown," he continued. "Global inventories for oil remain extremely tight and it's very clear that OPEC is growing addicted to triple digit oil."</p> <p>The nationwide average price of gasoline increased for the 14th consecutive day Tuesday, reaching \$3.81 per gallon, according to an AAA database. Pump prices had declined for 99 straight days between June and mid-September after hitting an all-time high of \$5.02 a gallon.</p> <p>Both the WTI index, the U.S. benchmark, and the global Brent crude benchmark traded 3% higher Tuesday in anticipation of OPEC's announcement Wednesday. The higher oil prices could signal more pain at the pump for consumers in the U.S. and abroad.</p> <p>"If they do something really specific where the Saudis and Kuwait and United Arab Emirates were going to shoulder the cuts, because other countries are having trouble being up to quota, then I think we march significantly higher for crude," Tom Klaza, the global head of energy analysis at research firm Oil Price Information Service (OPIS), told FOX Business in an interview.</p> <p>"I think we go higher for crude anyway in the next three or four months, but this is kind of what happens in the next three or four days," he continued. "So, I would say the lowest expectation is that they announce a cut of a million barrels a day, but it's across a membership that includes underperformance."</p> <p>At the same time, a series of routine and unexpected disruptions at U.S. refineries, which turn out petroleum products like gasoline and diesel fuel, has played a large role in gasoline price hikes. The closures have particularly impacted prices in California where the average pump price has skyrocketed to \$6.41 a gallon, more than a dollar higher than a month ago.</p>

"What's really been driving prices up in the last couple of weeks has been more related to an exceptional amount of refinery snags," De Haan told FOX Business. "But now that OPEC appears on the cusp of cutting oil production that could start setting prices a bit higher as well."

OPIS projects that about 3 million barrels a day of domestic refinery capacity, the equivalent of nearly 20% of total inputs, will be down at some point in October, Klaza said. "That's a lot," he added.

Overall, U.S. refiners are churning out about 90% of their total operable capacity, according to the most recent data from the Energy Information Administration. That figure is down from the roughly 95% utilization rate recorded in June.

AAA said Monday that consumers should "brace for rising pump prices" if demand remains high while refinery closures and maintenance forces supply lower. Domestic gasoline demand ticked up from 8.32 million barrels a day to 8.83 million barrels a day last week, EIA data showed.

De Haan also took aim at several government policies that he said have contributed to refinery snags and higher gasoline prices more broadly. He specifically criticized the Biden administration saying oil companies should increase refining capacity while it has openly advocated for a transition away from fossil fuels.

"The White House is basically picking a winner," he continued. "It's picking EVs and it's picking a loser: fossil fuels. What oil company is going to invest billions of dollars in building a new refinery? In this climate, it would be foolish."

"Talk about doublespeak. 'We need to build more and we're going to shut you down in 10 years.' That confusion is not going to build confidence in oil companies to say, 'hey, you know what, we'll expand our refinery by 100-.' No, nobody's going to do that."

President Biden wrote to seven major oil companies in June, warning that he was prepared to take action if they didn't boost refinery output. However, the administration was silent on whether companies should boost refinery capacity as gas prices decreased throughout the summer. Such refinery expansions are extremely costly and are increasingly risky in light of ever-more stringent environmental regulations.

Over the last two weeks, Biden has again directed his ire at the oil industry, [blaming companies for the rising prices](#). The White House, though, took credit for price decreases in July, August and September.

In light of increasing energy prices, a coalition of business groups including the Chamber of Commerce, 204 local Chambers of Commerce representing 47 states and 14 national trade associations penned a letter to Biden on Tuesday, urging him to boost offshore and onshore energy production. The Biden administration has continued to push its federal ban on new oil and gas leasing, even while asking foreign producers to increase output.

The letter noted that small and large businesses alike are facing increased costs for goods, services and transportation stemming from higher energy costs.

"With analysts predicting a return to high oil and natural gas prices this fall and winter, businesses are bracing for even more pressure," Marty Durbin, the president of the Chamber of Commerce's Global Energy Institute, said Tuesday.

"While we recognize that policies supporting increased production won't solve our challenges overnight, it will send important market signals that could help unlock investment, helping avoid long term supply shortages and elevated prices."

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HEADLINE	10/04 Health officials warn of severe flu season
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/flu-season-flu-shot-covid-vaccine/

GIST	<p>For years, Jeri Stuart didn't get a flu shot. Now, the 54-year-old breast cancer survivor does not want to gamble with her health.</p> <p>She got her flu shot last week.</p> <p>"My mother always hounded me to get them done," she said. "I figured, you know what, let's just get everything that we can to ensure that I don't get sick."</p> <p>The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is urging everyone 6 months and older to also get their flu shot. Public health officials are worried about a false sense of security after two milder flu seasons due to COVID precautions.</p> <p>Australia, which experiences winter ahead of the U.S., just had its worst flu season in five years.</p> <p>"I don't want to be alarmist, but I am concerned. We know that it's going to be a strain of flu that tends to be more severe," said Dr. Michael Phillips, an infectious disease expert at NYU Langone Health. "For those ages greater than 65, there's a specific formulations of vaccines that you should get and it dramatically reduces the likelihood of hospitalization and death."</p> <p>Less than half of U.S. adults plan to get a flu shot this year and just a third feel safe getting a flu shot and COVID-19 vaccine at the same time, according to a National Foundation for Infectious Diseases survey.</p> <p>Stuart opted for both a flu shot and the bivalent COVID booster, which the CDC says can be safely given together.</p> <p>"If it's something that's going to help lessen symptoms, then every little bit helps," she said.</p> <p>Flu season typically starts in October, peaks in December through February and can last into the spring. Like COVID vaccines, the flu shot may not stop you from getting infected, but the CDC says it can significantly lower the risk of hospitalization and death.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 Judge drops charges in Flint water crisis
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/judge-tosses-charges-people-flint-water-crisis-90985482
GIST	<p>A Michigan judge threw out felony charges Tuesday against seven people in the Flint water scandal, including two former state health officials blamed for deaths from Legionnaires' disease.</p> <p>The dismissal was significant but not a complete surprise after the Michigan Supreme Court in June said a different judge acting as a one-person grand jury had no authority to issue indictments.</p> <p>Judge Elizabeth Kelly rejected efforts by the attorney general's office to just send the cases to Flint District Court and turn them into criminal complaints, a typical path to filing felony charges in Michigan. It was a last-gasp effort to keep things afloat.</p> <p>"Anything arising out of the invalid indictments are irreconcilably tainted from inception. ... Simply put, there are no valid charges," Kelly said.</p> <p>Kelly's decision doesn't affect former Republican Gov. Rick Snyder. That's only because he was charged with two misdemeanors — willful neglect of duty — and his case is being handled by another judge. But he, too, was indicted in a process declared invalid by the Supreme Court. His next hearing is Oct. 26.</p> <p>In 2014, Flint managers appointed by Snyder took the city out of a regional water system and began using the Flint River to save money while a new pipeline to Lake Huron was being built. But the river water wasn't treated to reduce its corrosive qualities. Lead broke off from old pipes and contaminated the system for more than a year.</p>

The Michigan Civil Rights Commission said it was the result of systemic racism, doubting that the water switch and the brush-off of complaints in the majority-Black city would have occurred in a white, prosperous community.

The attorney general's office lashed out at the courts after its latest defeat, declaring that “well-connected, wealthy individuals with political power and influence” had prevailed over Flint residents.

“There are not adequate words to express the anger and disappointment felt by our team, who have spent years on this case only to see it thwarted based upon a new interpretation of a nearly century-old law,” the statement said.

Prosecutors, however, didn't mention that the Supreme Court's summer opinion was unanimous. The attorney general's office didn't indicate what's next, only that it will “continue its pursuit of justice for Flint.”

Besides lead contamination, the Flint River water was blamed for an outbreak of Legionnaires' disease, which typically spreads through cooling systems.

Former state health director Nick Lyon and former chief medical executive Eden Wells were charged with involuntary manslaughter in nine deaths linked to Legionnaires'. They were accused of failing to timely warn the Flint area about the outbreak.

Lyon's attorneys praised Kelly's decision and urged the attorney general's office to close a “misguided prosecution.”

“This misuse of the criminal justice system has to stop,” Chip Chamberlain and Ron DeWaard said. “Misleading statements about what Director Lyon did or didn't do contribute nothing to a constructive public dialogue and do not represent justice for anyone.”

Besides Lyon and Wells, charges were dismissed against Snyder's longtime fixer in state government, Rich Baird; former senior aide Jarrod Agen; former Flint managers Gerald Ambrose and Darnell Earley; and Nancy Peeler, a former health department manager.

Michigan's six-year statute of limitations could be a problem in some cases if the attorney general's office wants to file charges again. The deadline, however, would be longer for charges faced by Lyon and Wells.

Prosecutors in Michigan typically file felony charges in District Court after a police investigation. A one-judge grand jury was extremely rare and had mostly been used in Detroit and Flint to protect witnesses, especially in violent crimes, who could testify in private.

Prosecutors Fadwa Hammoud and Kym Worthy chose that path in the Flint water probe to hear evidence in secret and get indictments against Snyder and others.

But the state Supreme Court said Michigan law is clear: A one-judge grand jury can't issue indictments. The process apparently had never been challenged.

Chief Justice Bridget McCormack called it a “Star Chamber comeback,” a pejorative reference to an oppressive, closed-door style of justice in England in the 17th century.

An effort to hold people criminally responsible for Flint's lead-in-water disaster has lasted years and produced little.

Before leaving office in 2019, then-Attorney General Bill Schuette, a Republican, had pledged to put people in prison. But the results were different: Seven people pleaded no contest to misdemeanors that were eventually scrubbed from their records.

After Dana Nessel, a Democrat, was elected, she got rid of special counsel Todd Flood and put Hammoud, the state's solicitor general, and Worthy, the respected Wayne County prosecutor, in charge.

Flint activist Melissa Mays said residents have been let down.

"This team of people who promised justice for Flint didn't file the right paperwork," she said. "It's not like they went to trial and lost; we never even had a chance to get that far. ... The attorney general's team owes us to try again and do it right, but in my gut it's going to go nowhere. It was just a show."

Flint was poisoned, Mays said, "but not one person is behind bars."

There is no dispute that lead affects the brain and nervous system, especially in children. Experts have not identified a safe lead level in kids.

Facing a wave of lawsuits, the state agreed to pay \$600 million as part of a \$626 million settlement with Flint residents and property owners who were harmed by lead-tainted water. Most of the money is going to children.

Flint in 2015 returned to a water system based in southeastern Michigan. Meanwhile, roughly 10,100 lead or steel water lines had been replaced at homes by last December.

The city had 100,000 residents in 2010, but the population fell roughly 20% to 81,000 by the 2020 census, following the water crisis, according to the government.

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HEADLINE	10/04 Haiti chaos: economy tanks, violence soars
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/haiti-breaking-point-economy-tanks-violence-soars-90991617
GIST	<p>PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Daily life in Haiti began to spin out of control last month just hours after Prime Minister Ariel Henry said fuel subsidies would be eliminated, causing prices to double.</p> <p>Gunshots rang out as protesters blocked roads with iron gates and mango trees. Then Haiti's most powerful gang took a drastic step: It dug trenches to block access to the Caribbean country's largest fuel terminal, vowing not to budge until Henry resigns and prices for fuel and basic goods go down.</p> <p>The poorest country in the Western hemisphere is in the grips of an inflationary vise that is squeezing its citizenry and exacerbating protests that have brought society to the breaking point. Violence is raging and making parents afraid to send their kids to school; fuel and clean water are scarce; hospitals, banks and grocery stores are struggling to stay open.</p> <p>The president of neighboring Dominican Republic described the situation as a "low-intensity civil war."</p> <p>Life in Haiti is always extremely difficult, if not downright dysfunctional. But the magnitude of the current paralysis and despair is unprecedented. Political instability has simmered ever since last year's still-unsolved assassination of Haiti's president; inflation soaring around 30% has only aggravated the situation.</p> <p>"If they don't understand us, we're going to make them understand," said Pierre Killick Cemelus, who sweated as he struggled to keep pace with thousands of other protesters marching during a recent demonstration.</p> <p>The fuel depot blocked by gangs has been inoperable since Sept. 12, cutting off about 10 million gallons of diesel and gasoline and more than 800,000 gallons of kerosene stored on site. Many gas stations are closed, and others are quickly running out of supplies.</p>

The lack of fuel recently forced hospitals to cut back critical services and prompted water delivery companies to shut down. Banks and grocery stores also are struggling to stay open because of dwindling fuel supplies — and exorbitant prices — that make it nearly impossible for many workers to commute.

A gallon of gasoline costs \$30 on the black market in Port-au-Prince and more than \$40 in rural areas. Desperate people are walking for miles to get food and water because public transportation is extremely limited.

“Haiti is now in complete chaos,” said Alex Dupuy, a Haiti-born sociologist at Wesleyan University. “You have gangs basically doing whatever they want, wherever they want, whenever they want with complete impunity because the police force is not capable of bringing them under control.”

Henry’s de-facto government “doesn’t seem to be fazed at all by the chaos and is probably benefiting from it because it allows him to hold on to power and prolong as long as possible the organization of new elections,” Dupuy said.

Gangs have long wielded considerable power in Haiti, and their influence has only grown since the July 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse.

Gangs control roughly 40% of Port-au-Prince, the U.N. has estimated. They are fighting to control even more territory, killing hundreds of Haitians in recent months — including women and children — and driving away some 20,000 people from their homes. Kidnappings have spiked.

Henry has pledged to hold elections as soon as it’s safe to do so, writing in a speech read at the United Nations General Assembly on Sept. 24 that he has “no desire to stay in power longer than necessary.”

“My country is going through a multidimensional crisis whose consequences threaten democracy and the very foundations of the rule of law,” Henry said. He condemned widespread looting and violence, and said those responsible “will have to answer for their crimes before history and before the courts.”

U.S. President Joe Biden, also speaking at the U.N., said Haiti faces “political-fueled gang violence and an enormous human crisis.”

From 2004 until 2017, U.N. peacekeepers bolstered the country’s security and helped rebuild political institutions after a violent rebellion ousted former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. But for now, any foreign intervention in Haiti is off the table.

Local political leaders have repudiated the suggestion of outside help, noting that U.N. peacekeepers in Haiti sexually abused children and sparked a cholera epidemic more than a decade ago that killed nearly 10,000 people.

The first round of protests in mid-September prompted France and Spain to close their embassies and banks to shut down in the capital of Port-au-Prince. Protesters attacked businesses, the homes of well-known politicians and even warehouses of the United Nations’ World Food Program, stealing millions of dollars’ worth of food and water.

Protests have since grown bigger. Tens of thousands of people recently marched in Port-au-Prince and beyond, including the cities of Gonaïves and Cap-Haitien in the north. They waved leafy green branches and chanted, “Ariel has to go!”

Primary school teacher Jean-Wilson Fabre joined a recent protest as he ducked into a side street to avoid a cloud of tear gas thrown by police trying to control the crowd.

“He’s not doing anything,” he said of the prime minister.

The 40-year-old father of two sons lamented the lack of food and water, the rise of kidnappings and the growing power of gangs: “No one is crazy enough to send their kids to school in this situation. They will not be safe.”

Fabre is one of millions of parents who refused to send their children to school even though the government announced an Oct. 3 return to class as scheduled in an attempt to restore some normalcy amid an increasingly unstable situation.

Haiti’s courts also were slated to reopen on Oct. 3, but the country’s Bar Federation rejected an invitation from the prime minister to talk about the issue days before, noting that gangs still occupy a main courthouse in Port-au-Prince, among other problems.

“Under Ariel, things have gotten worse and worse,” said Merlay Saint-Pierre, a 28-year-old unemployed mother of two boys who joined a recent protest wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with a middle finger.

Hundreds of people have spent hours in line each day just to buy buckets of water. Delivery trucks cannot go into neighborhoods because of roadblocks.

“I’m scared of this water,” said 22-year-old Lionel Simon, noting he would use it to wash clothes and add chlorine before drinking it.

At least eight people have died of cholera in recent days and dozens more have been treated, according to local health officials who urged protesters and gang leaders to allow fuel and water to flow into neighborhoods.

But Simon was not worried about cholera. His biggest concerns are gangs and an increase in young children carrying guns.

“We don’t know if life will go back to normal,” he said. “If you die today, you don’t even know if you’re going to make it to a morgue. You could be left in the street for dogs and animals to eat you. This is how crazy the city has become.”

Dupuy, the Haitian expert, said it’s unlikely Henry would step down since there is no international pressure for him to do so. He worried there is no clear solution as the situation spirals: “How much more boiling point can there be?”

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HEADLINE	10/03 FBI: no credible threats to election systems
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2022/10/03/fbi-no-credible-threats-midterm-election/8166091001/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON – Federal authorities have identified no credible threats to U.S. election systems despite persistent efforts by foreign adversaries, including Russia, to amplify disinformation about voter fraud and election integrity, senior FBI officials said Monday.</p> <p>A month before the anticipated midterm vote, the officials said they were closely monitoring potential threats to election workers in the U.S., after local officials reported a wave of harassment and abuse before and after the contentious 2020 presidential election.</p> <p>Since June 2021, the federal Elections Threat Task Force has reviewed more than 1,000 reports. About 11% of those met the threshold for federal investigation, so far resulting in four arrests.</p> <p>The bulk of the potentially criminal threats involved election workers in seven states – Arizona, Georgia, Colorado, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Nevada and Wisconsin – where the vote was close and involved post-election challenges.</p>

In August, FBI Director [Christopher Wray expressed deep concern for rising violence](#) driven by an array of domestic grievances, from election-related disputes to lingering anger following the Supreme Court's decision to overturn the landmark abortion-rights case Roe v. Wade.

At the time, Wray called election and politically-motivated violence "almost a 365-day phenomenon," an outgrowth of the country's deep divide. Of the Supreme Court's recent abortion decision, he said tensions continue to run high.

"I feel like every day I'm getting briefed on somebody throwing a molotov cocktail at someone for some issue," Wray told the Senate Judiciary Committee. "It's crazy."

On Monday, the FBI officials said there was no evidence that election systems had been targeted by a cyber campaign aimed at disrupting operations or manipulating results.

A significant compromise of such decentralized local election systems in the country would be "very difficult," the officials said.

Still, authorities were tracking attempted efforts by Russia, China and Iran to wage their own attempts at sowing distrust and promoting conspiracy theories aimed at disrupting the vote.

Russia, the officials said, has done the most to amplify the message of so-called election deniers.

While, the officials did not single out primary sources of such activity in the U.S., former President Donald Trump has openly waged a campaign of denying the legitimacy of the 2020 election, falsely claiming widespread voter fraud.

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HEADLINE	10/04 Ukraine nuclear workers: abuse, threats
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/ukraine-nuclear-workers-recount-abuse-threats-russians-91023067
GIST	<p>ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine -- Alone in his apartment in the Russian-occupied city of Enerhodar in southeastern Ukraine, nuclear plant security guard Serhiy Shvets looked out his kitchen window in late May and saw gunmen approaching on the street below. When his buzzer rang, he was sure he was about to die.</p> <p>Shvets, a former soldier in Ukraine's military who was loyal to Kyiv, knew the gunmen would either kill or abduct and torture him. He thought briefly about recording a farewell to his family, who had fled to safety abroad, but instead lit a cigarette and grabbed his gun.</p> <p>Six Russian soldiers broke down his door and opened fire, which he returned. Wounded in the hand, thigh, ear, and stomach, Shvets began to lose consciousness. Before he did, he heard the commander of the group tell his men to cease fire and call an ambulance.</p> <p>Shvets, who survived the shooting, is among workers from the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant recounting their fears of being abducted and tortured or killed by Russian forces occupying the facility and the city of Enerhodar. Ukrainian officials say the Russians have sought to intimidate the staff into keeping the plant running, through beatings and other abuse. but also to punish those who express support for Kyiv.</p> <p>A GOOD LIFE BEFORE THE WAR</p> <p>Life was good for employees of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant before the Russian invasion of Feb. 24. They were guaranteed a financially secure and stable life for their families.</p>

And even though Ukraine still bears the psychological scars of the world's worst atomic accident at Chernobyl in 1986, the Zaporizhzhia plant — Europe's largest nuclear facility with its six reactors — provided jobs for about 11,000 people, making Enerhodar and its prewar population of 53,000 one of the wealthiest cities in the region.

But after Russia occupied the city early in the war, that once-comfortable life turned into nightmare.

The invaders overran the ZNPP, about 6 kilometers (nearly 4 miles) from Enerhodar, but kept the Ukrainian staff in place to run it. Both sides accused the other of shelling the plant that damaged power lines connecting it to the grid, raising international alarm for its safety. Ukrainian officials say the Russians used the plant as a shield from which to fire shells on nearby towns.

Reports of intimidation of the staff and abductions began trickling out over the summer. Rafael Mariano Grossi, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N.'s atomic watchdog, told The Associated Press about reports of violence between the Russians and the Ukrainian staff.

About 4,000 ZNPP workers fled. Those who stayed cited threats of kidnap and torture — underscored by the abduction Friday of plant director Ihor Murashov, who was seized and blindfolded by Russian forces on his way home from work.

He was freed Monday after being forced to make false statements on camera, according to Petro Kotin, head of Energoatom, Ukraine's state nuclear company. Kotin told AP Murashov was released at the edge of Russian-controlled territory and walked about 15 kilometers (9 miles) to Ukrainian-held areas.

"I would say it was mental torture," Kotin said of what Murashov suffered. "He had to say that all the shelling on the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant was made by Ukrainian forces and that he is a Ukrainian spy ... in contact with Ukrainian special forces."

Enerhodar's exiled Mayor Dmytro Orlov, who spoke to Murashov after his release, said the plant official told him he had spent two days "in solitary confinement in the basement, with handcuffs and a bag on his head. His condition can hardly be called normal."

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, described Murashov's abduction as "yet another manifestation of absolutely uncovered Russian terror."

'TERRIBLE THINGS HAPPEN THERE'

More than 1,000 people, including plant workers, were abducted from Enerhodar, although some have been released, estimated Orlov, who fled to Zaporizhzhia, the nearest city under Ukrainian control, after refusing to cooperate with the Russians. Kotin estimated that 100-200 remain abducted.

Orlov said the first abduction was March 19, when Russians seized his deputy, Ivan Samoidiuk, whose whereabouts remains unknown. The abductions then accelerated, he said.

"Mostly, they took people with a pro-Ukrainian position, who were actively involved in the resistance movement," he said.

Orlov alleged they were tortured at various locations in Enerhodar, including at the city's police station, in basements elsewhere and even in the ZNPP itself.

"Terrible things happen there," he said. "People who managed to come out say there was torture with electric currents, beatings, rape, shootings. ... Some people didn't survive."

Similar sites were seen by AP journalists in parts of the Kharkiv region abandoned by Russian troops after a Ukrainian counteroffensive. In the city of Izium, an AP investigation uncovered 10 separate torture sites.

Plant worker Andriy Honcharuk died in a hospital July 3 shortly after the Russians released him, beaten and unconscious, for refusing to follow their orders at the facility, Orlov said.

Oleksii, a worker who said he was responsible for controlling the plant's turbines and reactor compartment, fled Enerhodar in June when he learned Russian troops were looking for him. The 39-year-old asked not to be identified by his full name for fear of reprisal.

"It was psychologically difficult," Oleksii told the AP in Kyiv. "You go to the station and see the occupiers there. You come to your workplace already depressed."

Many plant employees "visited the basements" and were tortured there, he said.

"Graves appeared in the forest that surrounds the city. That is, everyone understands that something horrible is happening," he said. "They abduct people for their pro-Ukrainian position, or if they find any Telegram groups on their phone. This is enough for them to take a person away."

Another employee who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of his safety said he was unafraid of working at the plant amid shelling but decided to flee in September after colleagues were seized. He said Russians visited his home twice while he was away, and the possibility of torture was too much for him.

The plant's last reactor was shut down in September to guard against a disaster from constant shelling that cut reliable external power supplies needed for cooling and other safety systems. Kotin said the company could restart two of the reactors in a matter of days to protect safety installations as winter approaches and temperatures drop.

But the power plant sits in one of four regions that Russia has moved to annex, making its future uncertain.

Kotin on Tuesday renewed his call for a "demilitarized zone" around the plant, where two IAEA experts are based.

'FREEDOM OR DEATH'

For Serhiy Shvets, whose apartment was raided May 23, it was only a matter of time before the Russians came for him during the occupation of Enerhodar, he said. He had signed up to serve in Ukraine's territorial defense forces shortly after the invasion and had sent his wife and other relatives abroad for safety.

He said the Russian forces who shot him called the ambulance "so I could die in the hospital."

Doctors initially gave him a 5% chance of survival after he lost nearly two-thirds of his blood. But following several operations, he was well enough to leave Enerhodar in July and is living in Zaporizhzhia.

Shvets, whose right hand is in a metal brace, quietly exhaled from pain as he moved it and said the only thing he regrets now is that he is too disabled to fight.

"I'm a descendant from Zaporozhian Cossacks," he said, referring to his ancestors who lived on the territory of Ukraine from the 15th to 18th centuries and defended it from invaders. "There was no such thing as surrender for them — just freedom or death."

He added: "Why would I want such a life if I don't have my freedom?"

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HEADLINE	10/05 Putin signs laws: annex 4 Ukraine regions
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/putin-signs-laws-annexing-ukrainian-regions-91023070

GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine -- Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed laws absorbing four Ukrainian regions into Russia, a move that finalizes the annexation carried out in defiance of international law.</p> <p>The documents were published on a Russian government website on Wednesday morning.</p> <p>Earlier this week, both houses of the Russian parliament ratified treaties making the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions part of Russia. The formalities followed Kremlin-orchestrated “referendums” in the four regions that Ukraine and the West have rejected as a sham.</p> <p>The move comes as Moscow's war in Ukraine has entered a new, more dangerous phase. Russia faces mounting setbacks on the battlefield, with Ukrainian forces retaking more and more land in the east and in the south — the very regions Moscow has pushed to annex.</p> <p>The borders of the territories Russia is claiming still remain unclear, but the Kremlin has vowed to defend Russia's territory — the newly absorbed regions, too — with any means at its disposal, including nuclear weapons.</p> <p>Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy responded to the annexation by announcing a fast-track application to join NATO and formally ruling out talks with Russia. Zelenskyy’s decree, released Tuesday, declares that holding negotiations with Putin has become impossible after his decision to take over the four regions of Ukraine.</p> <p>On the battlefield on Wednesday morning, multiple explosions rocked Bila Tserkva, setting off fires at what were described as infrastructure facilities in the city to the south of the capital Kyiv, regional leader Oleksiy Kuleba said on Telegram.</p> <p>Early indications are that the city was attacked by so-called “kamikaze” or suicide drones, he said.</p> <p>Bila Tserkva is about 80 kilometers (50 miles) south of Kyiv.</p> <p>Russia has increasingly been using suicide drones in recent weeks, posing a new challenge to Ukrainian defenses. The unmanned vehicles can stay aloft for long periods of time before diving into their targets and detonating their payload at the last moment.</p> <p>Many of the earlier attacks by the Iranian-made drones happened in the south of the country and not near the capital, which hasn't been targeted for weeks.</p> <p>In a later post, Kuleba said that a total of six Shahed-136 drones struck the city, one of the largest in the region after Kyiv itself. One person was injured in the attacks.</p> <p>Dozens of rescue workers were on the scene and still working to extinguish the fires hours after the attacks were reported, he said.</p> <p>Ukrainian forces, in the meantime, continued to make gains in the south. Kyiv's military said Wednesday they have recaptured more villages in the Kherson region as a part of their massive counteroffensive effort.</p> <p>Operational Command South said that the Ukrainian flag has been raised above Liubymivka, Khreschenivka, Zolota Balka, Biliaivka, Ukrainka, Velyka and Mala Oleksandrivka villages.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 US starts fiscal year: \$31trillion in debt
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/us-starts-fiscal-year-record-31-trillion-debt-91004017
GIST	WASHINGTON -- The nation's gross national debt has surpassed \$31 trillion, according to a U.S. Treasury report released Tuesday that logs America's daily finances.

Edging closer to the statutory ceiling of roughly \$31.4 trillion — an artificial cap Congress placed on the U.S. government's ability to borrow — the debt numbers hit an already tenuous economy facing high inflation, rising interest rates and a strong U.S. dollar.

And while President Joe Biden has touted his administration's deficit reduction efforts this year and recently signed the so-called Inflation Reduction Act, which attempts to tame 40-year high price increases caused by a variety of economic factors, economists say the latest debt numbers are a cause for concern.

Owen Zidar, a Princeton economist, said rising interest rates will exacerbate the nation's growing debt issues and make the debt itself more costly. The Federal Reserve has raised rates several times this year in an effort to combat inflation.

Zidar said the debt “should encourage us to consider some tax policies that almost passed through the legislative process but didn't get enough support,” like imposing higher taxes on the wealthy and closing the carried interest loophole, which allows money managers to treat their income as capital gains.

“I think the point here is if you weren't worried before about the debt before, you should be — and if you were worried before, you should be even more worried,” Zidar said.

The Congressional Budget Office earlier this year released a report on America's debt load, warning in its 30-year outlook that, if unaddressed, the debt will soon spiral upward to new highs that could ultimately imperil the U.S. economy.

In its August Mid-Session Review, the administration forecasted that this year's budget deficit will be nearly \$400 billion lower than it estimated back in March, due in part to stronger than expected revenues, reduced spending, and an economy that has recovered all the jobs lost during the multi-year pandemic.

In full, this year's deficit will decline by \$1.7 trillion, representing the single largest decline in the federal deficit in American history, the Office of Management and Budget said in August.

Maya MacGuineas, president of the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget said in an emailed statement Tuesday, “This is a new record no one should be proud of.”

“In the past 18 months, we've witnessed inflation rise to a 40-year high, interest rates climbing in part to combat this inflation, and several budget-busting pieces of legislation and executive actions,” MacGuineas said. “We are addicted to debt.”

A representative from the Treasury Department was not immediately available for comment.

Sung Won Sohn, an economics professor at Loyola Marymount University, said “it took this nation 200 years to pile up its first trillion dollars in national debt, and since the pandemic we have been adding at the rate of 1 trillion nearly every quarter.”

Predicting high inflation for the “foreseeable future,” he said, “when you increase government spending and money supply, you will pay the price later.”

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HEADLINE	10/04 SKorea reprisal missile crashes, burns
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/korea-missile-accident-panics-public-edge-north-91007707
GIST	SEOUL, South Korea -- A malfunctioning South Korean ballistic missile blew up as it plowed into the ground Wednesday during a live-fire drill with the United States that was a reprisal for North Korea's successful launch a day earlier of a weapon that flew over Japan and has the range to strike the U.S. territory of Guam.

The explosion and subsequent fire panicked and confused residents of the coastal city of Gangneung, who were already uneasy over the increasingly provocative weapons tests by rival North Korea. Their concern that it could be a North Korean attack only grew as the military and government officials provided no explanation about the explosion for hours.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said no injuries were reported from the explosion, which involved a short-range Hyumoo-2 missile that crashed inside an air force base in the outskirts of the city.

A Joint Chiefs of Staff official, who spoke on condition of anonymity during a background briefing, said the missile's warhead didn't explode during the crash and that the fire was caused by burning rocket propellant. The official said the missile fell shortly after liftoff and that no civilian facilities were affected.

Kwon Seong-dong, a ruling party lawmaker representing Gangneung, wrote on Facebook that a "weapons system operated by our blood-like taxpayer money ended up threatening our own people" and called for the military to thoroughly investigate the missile failure. He also criticized the military for not issuing a notice about the failure while maintaining a media embargo on the joint drills.

"It was an irresponsible response," Kwon wrote. "They don't even have an official press release yet."

South Korea's military acknowledged the malfunction hours after internet users raised alarm about the blast and posted social media videos showing an orange ball of flames emerging from an area they described as near the air force base. It said it was investigating what caused the "abnormal flight" of the missile.

Officials at Gangneung's fire department and city hall said emergency workers were dispatched to the air force base and a nearby army base in response to calls about a possible explosion but were sent back by military officials.

The U.S. and South Korean militaries are conducting the joint exercises to show their ability to deter a North Korean attack on the South. During Tuesday's drills, they conducted bombing runs by F-15 strike jets using precision munitions and launched two missiles each that are part of the Army Tactical Missile System.

Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the U.S. aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan was scheduled to return to waters east of South Korea on Wednesday to demonstrate the allies' "firm will" to counter North's continued provocations and threats. The carrier was part of drills last week with South Korea and Japan.

The homegrown Hyumoo-2 is key to South Korea's preemptive and retaliatory strike strategies against the North. Some versions of the missile are similar to Russian-designed Iskander missiles, which also inspired a localized variant in North Korea as it expands its arsenal of nuclear-capable short-range weapons designed to evade South Korea's missile defenses.

North Korea's successful launch of a nuclear-capable ballistic missile hours before the drills was the country's most provocative weapons demonstration since 2017 and was its fifth round of weapons tests in 10 days.

That missile has a range capable of striking Guam, which is home to one of the largest military facilities maintained by the U.S. in Asia. North Korea in 2017 also tested missiles capable of hitting the continental United States.

Japan's lower house, the more powerful of the two-chamber parliament, adopted a resolution on Wednesday condemning North Korea's launch, saying that the flight over Japan posed a "grave and imminent" threat to the country's security.

South Korea's Foreign Ministry said the country's deputy nuclear envoy, Lee Tae-woo, met with U.S. counterpart Jung Park in Seoul on Wednesday to discuss the recent North Korean launches and vowed to

	<p>strengthen three-way cooperation with Tokyo to counter the threat and bring Pyongyang back to the negotiation table.</p> <p>North Korea has fired nearly 40 ballistic missiles over about 20 different launch events this year, exploiting Russia's war on Ukraine and the resulting deep divide in the U.N. Security Council to accelerate its arms development without risking further sanctions.</p> <p>Its aim is to develop a fully fledged nuclear arsenal capable of threatening the U.S. mainland and its allies while gaining recognition as a nuclear state and wresting concessions from those countries.</p> <p>The United States, Britain, France, Albania, Norway and Ireland called for an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council over the latest North Korean launch. The open meeting was scheduled for 3 p.m. Wednesday.</p> <p>Washington's nuclear diplomacy with Pyongyang has stalled since 2019 over disagreements in exchanging the release of crippling U.S.-led sanctions against the North and the North's disarmament steps.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 Ferrari denies ransomware attack, breach
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/ferrari-denies-data-breach-and-ransomware-attack-following-gangs-online-claims/
GIST	<p>Luxury car maker Ferrari is denying that it was hit with a ransomware attack after a gang added the company to its list of victims this week.</p> <p>The ransomware group RansomEXX posted to its leak site on Sunday claiming to have stolen 7 GB of data from the company. The stolen documents allegedly include contracts, invoices, internal company information, repair manuals and more.</p> <p>But in a statement to The Record on Tuesday, a Ferrari spokesperson said it was aware of reports that documents from the company have been leaked online but said it is not dealing with any kind of ransomware attack or cybersecurity incident.</p> <p>“Ferrari has no evidence of a breach of its systems or ransomware and informs there has been no disruption to our business and operations,” the spokesperson said. “The Company is working to identify the source of the event and will implement all the appropriate actions as needed.”</p> <p>The RansomEXX listing did not include a specific ransom demand or details about how they allegedly attacked the company.</p> <p>The gang has previously been accused of attacking and shutting down the government of Lazio's portal for COVID-19 vaccinations, as well as other IT systems, in August 2021, and of attacking a Scottish mental health charity in March.</p> <p>Tanium's Chris Vaughan told The Record that the group has targeted several other high-profile companies in the past such as Gigabyte, Hellman Worldwide and fashion brand Zegna.</p> <p>Ransomware groups have increasingly targeted automotive companies in recent years, crippling Japanese automotive hose giant Nichirin in June and German multinational parts-maker Eberspächer Group in October 2021. In February, ransomware actors attacked Emil Frey, one of Europe's biggest car dealers.</p>

	<p>Reuters noted that Ferrari itself has been tangentially affected by ransomware in the past, citing a 2021 incident where the Everest ransomware group successfully attacked Speroni, a parts supplier for Ferrari, Lamborghini and Maserati.</p> <p>But the Everest ransomware group has also previously been shown to lie about the attacks launched, something a number of ransomware groups have been accused of. Some gangs have lied about attacks in the past or overstated the data stolen, misrepresenting attacks on subsidiaries or local offices as attacks on a company as a whole.</p> <p>Last month, the Clop ransomware group claimed on its leak site that it attacked Thames Water — a water provider in the U.K. — but it had actually attacked South Staffordshire, another provider in the region. Prolific ransomware gang LockBit also appears to have lied about an attack on cybersecurity firm Mandiant in June.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 BEC scam: email forwarded from boss
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/this-sneaky-fraud-attack-looks-like-an-email-forwarded-by-your-boss/
GIST	<p>A business email compromise (BEC) campaign is using an email thread that pretends to have been forwarded by the boss in a bid to trick targets into handing over big sums of money.</p> <p>Not only are BEC attacks one of the most lucrative forms of cybercrime — the FBI says they've cost victims a combined total of more than \$43 billion in recent years — but they're also one of the simplest to carry out because all attackers really need is an internet connection, an email account and perhaps some background research into their targets.</p> <p>Often, BEC emails seem to be from a colleague or a boss, claiming that a wire transfer must be made quickly and quietly, with scammers hoping that generating a sense of urgency will be enough to trick the unfortunate target into making a bogus payment.</p> <p>But with a little more nuance, BEC attacks have the potential to be more effective and harder for victims to spot — and that could prove very costly for businesses.</p> <p>One of these more advanced BEC campaigns is designed to trick victims into thinking they've been forwarded an ongoing thread by their boss, asking them to deal with an invoice and make a payment — which is sent to an account run by the scammer.</p> <p>The campaign has been detailed by cybersecurity researchers at Abnormal Security, who describe it as a "a sophisticated new business email compromise attack" that combines vendor impersonation with executive impersonation.</p> <p>Attacks are even personalized, using email spoofing and a claim that they're from an actual executive of the company that the target victim works for.</p> <p>And to make the attack look more convincing, it's designed to look like it's part of an ongoing thread, with the "boss" asking the victim to set up a financial transaction related to a business payment that is referenced in the forwarded email. But like the message from the "boss", the forwarded request for an invoice is also fake, made up by scammers as part of the lure.</p> <p>By using an invoice request that looks like it's being paid to a real company, the attackers hope the target organisation might have a genuine business relationship with the victim and will follow the instructions and make the transfer without asking questions or alerting anyone else.</p> <p>And because there's no malware or malicious code used in BEC attacks, they often bypass email protections.</p>

	<p>"Like all BEC attacks, the reason traditional email defenses have a difficult time detecting them is because they don't contain any of the static indicators most defenses look out for, like malicious links or attachments. Most BEC attacks are nothing more than pure, text-based social engineering that traditional email defenses are not well-equipped to detect," Crane Hassold, director of threat intelligence at Abnormal Security, told ZDNET.</p> <p>According to analysis of the attacks, the campaign has been active since July 2022 and is believed to be the work of a group that researchers refer to as Cobalt Terrapin, which appears to operate out of Turkey</p> <p>The nature of BEC campaigns makes them tricky to defend against, particularly when the attacks rely on social engineering, instead of relying on malware or other malicious activity that can be detected by anti-virus software.</p> <p>However, it's possible to take steps to help detect against BEC email threats – and those measures start with educating staff on how to identify scam emails. For example, by examining if the email is correct, or if an unexpected message has been sent with an unusually urgent request.</p> <p>Staff should also be advised to verify any suspect request through a different means of communication, such as instant messaging or a phone call.</p> <p>Taking the time to verify a request might sound unintuitive in a fast-paced business environment, but it could save you from losing hundreds of thousands of dollars in a BEC attack.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 FBI issues PSA: beware of fake batteries
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/fbi-beware-of-fake-batteries-heres-what-to-watch-out-for/
GIST	<p>The FBI has issued a public service announcement (PSA) warning consumers of the risks of buying counterfeit batteries for their devices.</p> <p>The bureau warns that scammers are using "vulnerabilities in the global supply chain" and constant consumer demand for new batteries to sell a variety of counterfeits and unauthorized replicas online.</p> <p>The FBI warns that counterfeit batteries are dangerous to consumers and their devices as they don't undergo the same testing as original equipment manufacturer (OEM) batteries.</p> <p>The FBI's warning is not specific to laptops or smartphones, which makes sense given that batteries are now found in everything from cars, scooters, e-bikes, e-cigarettes and trains to drones and more. Sometimes they need to be replaced.</p> <p>The FBI only notes that "reputable OEMs will recommend a compatible size and type of battery for different devices."</p> <p>Some of the risks of using alternative manufacturers or battery types include overheating that may cause fires or explosions and result in personal injury or property damage. Other risks include poor battery performance, or complete product failure.</p> <p>"When designed, manufactured, and used properly, batteries are a safe power source. However, batteries can cause injury if they are designed improperly, made of low-quality materials, assembled incorrectly, charged improperly, or damaged. Always research the legitimacy of the seller and battery manufacturer before buying," the FBI's Internet Crime Center (IC3) says.</p> <p>The FBI doesn't mention which online markets or websites customers are selling counterfeit batteries.</p> <p>A problem for many consumers is that it's very hard to separate counterfeit from authentic products.</p>

The FBI recommends consumers "always purchase" batteries from legitimate and trusted sources. These include "authorized dealers or distributors that sell batteries tested by nationally recognized testing laboratories."

Also, device manufacturers can sell batteries directly via their websites, or provide a list of trusted vendors.

Consumers can also find a list of nationally recognized testing labs via [a page on the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#).

In its list of dos, don'ts and 'watch out for' actions when purchasing batteries, the FBI notes that it is good for consumers to shop around before purchasing but warns: "batteries sold at deep discounts or at significantly lower-than-average prices are likely counterfeit."

It also suggests consumers avoid aftermarket batteries "when possible" because they might be dangerous. Consumers should research and read reviews because some aftermarket sellers aren't trustworthy.

"Consumers should avoid all third-party purchases of batteries, as they can appear to be legitimate OEM batteries but are likely counterfeit," it notes.

It says to "always avoid" batteries that are: not properly packaged; have misprinted or misspelled labels; have labels that peel off; or do not have official manufacturer batch numbers.

The tech industry has struggled with various semiconductor and component shortages after the pandemic. Fakes aren't the only worry when it comes to batteries: reported battery shortages have been related to increasing demand for electric vehicles (EVs).

The World Economic Forum is worried about a [global shortage of lithium as the world attempts to shift to EVs to cut CO2 emissions](#) to net zero. The International Energy Agency predicts global lithium shortages by 2025 and notes that two billion EVs need to be on the road by 2050 to reach net zero. Last year, just 6.6 million EVs were sold.

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HEADLINE	10/05 Malicious Tor browser installer via YouTube
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/news/third-party-risk/threat-actors-use-youtube-to-distribute-poisoned-tor-browser-installer
GIST	<p>Kaspersky researchers noticed a rather clever way threat actors are deceiving users in China into downloading a malicious Tor browser installer that can be used to track the history and location of its victims.</p> <p>The website for the Tor browser is banned in China, so users often resort to using third-party sites to download the contraband browser. In this case, the Kaspersky researchers say their telemetry detected the malicious installers via a link on a popular Chinese-language YouTube channel devoted to anonymity on the internet that has over 180,000 subscribers.</p> <p>The video with the link to the malicious installer first appeared on the YouTube channel in January, with victims starting to appear in March; it has been viewed over 64,000 times.</p> <p>The Kaspersky researchers dubbed the campaign "OnionPoison" after Tor's onion routing technique for anonymous communications, adding: "Unlike the legitimate one, the infected Tor Browser stores browsing history and data entered into website forms. More importantly, one of the libraries bundled with the malicious Tor Browser is infected with spyware that collects various personal data and sends it to a command and control server. The spyware also provides the functionality to execute shell commands on the victim machine, giving the attacker control over it."</p>

Return to Top	<p>The links are embedded in the description of the video, and since Tor is banned in China, users there are forced to download the malicious installer that's hosted on a Chinese cloud-sharing service. The researchers note that one of the stages of the malware only deploys on machines with a Chinese IP address.</p> <p>"We can therefore say that the OnionPoison campaign targets users that are located in China."</p> <p>If installed, the command-and-control server may request history from the Tor, Chrome and Microsoft Edge browsers, identities of WeChat and QQ accounts, and SSIDs and MAC addresses of WiFi networks.</p> <p>The Kaspersky researchers concluded: "Curiously, unlike common stealers, OnionPoison implants do not automatically collect user passwords, cookies or wallets. Instead, they gather data that can be used to identify the victims, such as browsing histories, social networking account IDs and Wi-Fi networks. The attackers can search the exfiltrated browser histories for traces of illegal activity, contact the victims via social networks and threaten to report them to the authorities."</p> <p>Check out the original blog post on the Kaspersky website for more details on this threat.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 Landmark US-UK data access agreement
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/landmark-usuk-data-access/
GIST	<p>A first-of-its-kind agreement between the US and UK governments came into force this week, promising to streamline digital investigations for British law enforcers.</p> <p>The Data Access Agreement technically allows each country's investigators to benefit from faster access to data stored by service providers in the other country, although in practice it will mainly benefit UK cops requesting information from US social media and other companies.</p> <p>Because of local legal restrictions on US providers sharing their data with foreign governments, investigators were previously forced to lodge requests via Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLATs), which was a slow, painful and error-prone process.</p> <p>The Data Access Agreement will speed things up considerably, forcing cloud storage companies, social media providers, messaging platforms and other digital service providers to reply to overseas production orders (OPOs) within seven days, according to law firm Cooley.</p> <p>Failure to do so could render them in contempt of court, it warned.</p> <p>"The Data Access Agreement will allow information and evidence that is held by service providers within each of our nations and relates to the prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of serious crime to be accessed more quickly than ever before," noted a joint statement penned between Washington and London.</p> <p>"This will help, for example, our law enforcement agencies gain more effective access to the evidence they need to bring offenders to justice, including terrorists and child abuse offenders, thereby preventing further victimization."</p> <p>However, legal experts have also warned that any UK service providers responding to requests from US law enforcers would have to consider whether there was a "legal basis" for data transfers under the GDPR. Data flowing the other way would not be subject to the same concerns given the European Commission's adequacy decision regarding the UK.</p> <p>That said, Cooley predicted that OPOs would still come under intense legal scrutiny.</p>

	<p>“It is expected that OPOs may (and will) be challenged on a significant number of different grounds, including for breach of data protection laws and to determine applicability of US or UK legal privilege protections,” it said.</p> <p>“The primary venue to challenge OPOs sent by UK law enforcement will be the Courts of England and Wales; however, it is likely that challenges will be made concurrently in the US. The scene is now set for critically important legal challenges to be made to help determine how the new process should be applied across the CSP community.”</p> <p>Firms served with an OPO are urged to seek legal advice as soon as they receive an order.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/05 Ransomware group bypasses EDR tools
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/ransomware-bypasses-enormous-range/
GIST	<p>A notorious ransomware group has been spotted leveraging sophisticated techniques to bypass endpoint detection and response (EDR) tools.</p> <p>BlackByte, which the US government has said poses a serious threat to critical infrastructure, used a “Bring Your Own Driver” technique to circumvent over 1000 drivers used by commercially available EDR products, according to Sophos.</p> <p>The UK cybersecurity vendor explained in a new report that the group had exploited a known vulnerability, CVE-2019-16098, in Windows graphics utility driver RTCorec6.sys.</p> <p>This enabled it to communicate directly with a victim system’s kernel and issue commands to disable callback routines used by EDR tools.</p> <p>The group also used EDR bypass techniques borrowed from open source tool EDRSandblast to deactivate the Microsoft-Windows-Threat-Intelligence ETW (Event Tracing for Windows) provider.</p> <p>This is a Windows feature “that provides logs about the use of commonly maliciously abused API calls such as NtReadVirtualMemory to inject into another process’s memory,” explained Sophos. Neutralizing it in this way renders any security tool relying on the feature also useless, the firm argued.</p> <p>“If you think of computers as a fortress, for many EDR providers, ETW is the guard at the front gate,” said Christopher Budd, senior manager, threat research at Sophos.</p> <p>“If the guard goes down, then that leaves the rest of the system extremely vulnerable. And, because ETW is used by so many different providers, BlackByte’s pool of potential targets for deploying this EDR bypass is enormous.”</p> <p>BlackByte is not the only ransomware group using these advanced techniques to get around existing detection tools, illustrating the continued arms race between attackers and defenders. AvosLocker used a similar method in May, Sophos said.</p> <p>“Anecdotally, from what we’re seeing in the field, it does appear that EDR bypass is becoming a more popular technique for ransomware threat groups,” confirmed Budd.</p> <p>“This is not surprising. Threat actors often leverage tools and techniques developed by the ‘offensive security’ industry to launch attacks faster and with minimal effort.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 FBI warns of ‘Pig Butchering’ crypto scams
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SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/fbi-warns-of-pig-butcherer-cryptocurrency-investment-schemes/
GIST	<p>The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) warns of a rise in 'Pig Butchering' cryptocurrency scams used to steal ever-increasing amounts of crypto from unsuspecting investors.</p> <p>The warning was issued as a Private Industry Notification from the FBI Miami Field Office in coordination with the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) yesterday to raise awareness among cryptocurrency investors who are increasingly being targeted by these types of scams.</p> <p>Pig Butchering is a relatively new social engineering scam where fraudsters contact people (the "Pigs") on social media and build trust by engaging in long-term communication, establishing the idea of a fabricated friendship or romantic partnership. Sometimes, the scammers impersonate real friends of the target.</p> <p>At some point, the fraudsters propose that the victim invests in cryptocurrency on phony platforms that aren't linked to an actual cryptocurrency exchange or market.</p> <p>Victims visiting these fake investment dashboards see massive returns, thinking their investment is already generating profit. The fake investment returns prime the target for the next stage of the scam, which is to press them to invest ever-increasing amounts and not withdraw anything.</p> <p>At some point, the victim attempts to cash out on their investments, which is when they are told that they need to pay income taxes first, additional processing fees, international transaction costs, etc.</p> <p>Eventually, the fraudster stops communication and shuts down the fake crypto exchange, or the victim gives up after realizing they have been scammed. Unfortunately, this can be months into the scam with the victim already giving huge amounts of funds to the fraudsters ranging from thousands to millions of dollars.</p> <p>"Many victims report being directed to make wire transfers to overseas accounts or purchase large amounts of prepaid cards," explains the FBI notice.</p> <p>"The use of cryptocurrency and cryptocurrency ATMs is also an emerging method of payment. Individual losses related to these schemes ranged from tens of thousands to millions of dollars."</p> <p>Forbes recently reported on a 52-year-old man from San Francisco who lost \$1 million to a Pig Butchering scam after being contacted by fraudsters pretending to be an old colleague.</p> <p>Spot the scams early</p> <p>Due to the rising growth of these types of scams and the significant financial losses victims can suffer, it's crucial to recognize them as early as possible.</p> <p>The FBI has listed the following characteristics of "Pig Butchering" that people should consider as red flags:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are contacted by a long-lost contact or a stranger on social media. • The URL of the investment platform doesn't match the official website of a popular cryptocurrency market/exchange but is very similar (typo-squatting). • The investment app you have downloaded generates warnings of being "untrusted" when launched on Windows, or your anti-virus marks it as potentially dangerous. • The investment opportunity sounds too good to be true. <p>People who suspect they may have been victims of "Pig Butchering" are urged to report it to the crime complaint center at ic3.gov, including as many details as possible, to help law enforcement track down the scammers.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 Cheerscrypt linked to China hacking group
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/cheerscrypt-ransomware-linked-to-a-chinese-hacking-group/
GIST	<p>The Cheerscrypt ransomware has been linked to a Chinese hacking group named 'Emperor Dragonfly,' known to frequently switch between ransomware families to evade attribution.</p> <p>The ransomware gang is tracked under different names, such as Bronze Starlight (Secureworks) and DEV-0401 (Microsoft), and has been seen using a wide variety of ransomware families since 2021.</p> <p>While the hacking group appears to operate as a ransomware operation, previous research indicates that many of their victims are targets of interest for the Chinese government.</p> <p>This has led researchers to believe that the ransomware activities of the hacking group could be a cover for Chinese government-sponsored cyber espionage campaigns.</p> <p>Night Sky and Cheerscrypt</p> <p>During an incident response earlier this year, Sygnia's security experts determined that the hackers exploited the Apache 'Log4Shell' Log4j vulnerability (CVE-2021-44228) to execute PowerShell commands, which initiates a DLL-sideload technique characteristic of Night Sky TTPs.</p> <p>Next, the intruders dropped a Cobalt Strike beacon connected to a C2 address previously associated with Night Sky operations.</p> <p>The attackers deployed three Go tools rarely seen in the ransomware space: a modified Aliyun OSS keylogger, a customized version of the 'IOX' port-forwarding and proxy tool, and a customized version of the 'NPS' tunneling tool.</p> <p>After reconnaissance and lateral movement, following in the footsteps of past Night Sky attacks, the ransomware strain deployed was not Night Sky but Cheerscrypt, encrypting Windows and Linux ESXi machines.</p> <p>Trend Micro first spotted the 'Cheers' ransomware in May 2022 after the researchers found an encryptor targeting VMware ESXi servers.</p> <p>Like other enterprise-targeting ransomware groups, the hackers breach networks, steal data, and encrypt devices. The data is then used in double-extortion tactics to pressure a victim into paying a ransom. If a ransom is not paid, the stolen data is published on a data leak site...</p> <p>Frequently switching ransomware strains</p> <p>According to Sygnia, Cheerscrypt is yet another one of Emperor Dragonfly's continual payload rebranding efforts, attempting to evade attribution.</p> <p>The ransomware group isn't operating as a RaaS (Ransomware-as-a-Service) platform for affiliates but rather as a "lone wolf" isolated from the rest of the cybercrime community.</p> <p>A June 2022 report by Secureworks hypothesized that the particular threat actor uses ransomware families like Night Sky, Rook, Pandora, and AtomSilo to mask government-sponsored cyberespionage campaigns as financially-motivated attacks.</p> <p>That same month, Microsoft updated an article on ransomware operations to include the hacking group, who they track as DEV-0401, and attributed them to Chinese threat actors.</p> <p>"Differing from the other RaaS developers, affiliates, and access brokers profiled here, DEV-0401 appears to be an activity group involved in all stages of their attack lifecycle, from initial access to ransomware development," explained the Microsoft threat intelligence researchers.</p>

	<p>"Despite this, they seem to take some inspiration from successful RaaS operations with the frequent rebranding of their ransomware payloads."</p> <p>"Unique among human-operated ransomware threat actors tracked by Microsoft, DEV-0401 is confirmed to be a China-based activity group."</p> <p>Like Secureworks, Microsoft also found them constantly switching between ransomware brands, including additional strains, such as LockFile and LockBit 2.0.</p> <p>Night Sky, Pandora, and Rook were all derived from leaked Babuk source code and share numerous similarities in their code. In addition, trend Micro previously stated that Cheerscrypt also seems to use Babuk as its basis, so the pieces fit.</p> <p>No matter what the real goal of 'Emperor Dragonfly' is, as the group commonly targets vulnerabilities in Internet-exposed servers, it is essential to apply security updates to your devices as soon as possible.</p> <p>As the group is known to target the Log4j vulnerability in VMware Horizon servers, applying patches to these devices should be a priority for all organizations.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 Hackers breach scam sites to hijack crypto
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hackers-are-breaching-scam-sites-to-hijack-crypto-transactions/
GIST	<p>In a perfect example of there being no honor among thieves, a threat actor named 'Water Labbu' is hacking into cryptocurrency scam sites to inject malicious JavaScript that steals funds from the scammer's victims.</p> <p>In July, the FBI warned of scam 'dApps' (decentralized applications) that impersonated cryptocurrency liquidity mining services but, in reality, stole a victim's crypto investments.</p> <p>Liquidity mining is when an investor lends their crypto to a decentralized exchange in exchange for high rewards, commonly generated through trading fees.</p> <p>However, instead of creating their own scam sites, Water Labbu hacks into these types of fake dApp sites and injects JavaScript code into site's HTML.</p> <p>The hackers do not engage with the victims and instead leave all the social engineering work to the scammers.</p> <p>When an investor connects to their wallet to the dApp, Water Labbu's script will detect if it contains a lot of crypto holdings, and if so, attempts to steal it using multiple methods described below.</p> <p>According to the analysts, Water Labbu has compromised at least 45 scam websites, most following the "lossless mining liquidity pledge" theme.</p> <p>Trend Micro says the profit made by Water Labbu is estimated to be at least \$316,728 based on transaction records from nine identified victims.</p> <p>No honor among thieves</p> <p>The parasitic threat actor locates cryptocurrency scam websites and injects the "dapps" with malicious scripts that easily blend with the website's systems.</p> <p>"In one of the cases we analyzed, Water Labbu injected an IMG tag to load a Base64- encoded JavaScript payload using the "onerror" event, in what is known as an XSS evasion technique, to bypass Cross-Site Scripting (XSS) filters," details Trend Micro's report.</p>

“The injected payload then creates another script element that loads another script from the delivery server tmpmeta[.]com.”

The script monitors newly connected wallets on the scam sites and retrieves the address and balances of TetherUSD and Ethereum wallets.

If the balance is above 0.005 ETH or 22,000 USDT, the target is valid for Water Labbu, and the script then determines if the victim is using Windows or a mobile OS (Android, iOS).

If the victim is on a mobile device, Water Labbu's malicious script sends a transaction approval request via the dApp site, so it appears as if it comes from the scam website.

If the recipient agrees to the transaction, the malicious script will drain the wallet of its funds and send them to an address owned by Water Labbu.

For Windows users, the hacked sites will show a fake Flash Player update notice overlayed on the scam site instead. The Flash installer is, in reality, a backdoor fetched directly from GitHub.

The threat actors then use this backdoor to steal cryptocurrency wallets and cookies from the device.

Scammed twice

For victims, the result is the same; they lose all of their cryptocurrency.

The only thing that has changed with this attack is that the victim's digital assets are diverted from the original scammer to the Water Labbu hacking group.

To avoid these types of scams, always research dApp sites, especially liquidity mining platforms, to determine if they are legitimate before you connect your wallet to them.

Also, periodically review your wallet's allowed sites to make sure you did not inadvertently add a scam site.

Finally, never jump into investments with strangers you meet on social media, as they [commonly lead to scams](#), and avoid trading cryptocurrency on unknown exchanges.

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HEADLINE	10/04 Hackers stole defense firm's sensitive data
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/us-govt-hackers-stole-data-from-us-defense-org-using-new-malware/
GIST	<p>The U.S. Government today released an alert about state-backed hackers using a custom CovalentStealer malware and the Impacket framework to steal sensitive data from a U.S. organization in the Defense Industrial Base (DIB) sector.</p> <p>The compromise lasted for about ten months and it is likely that multiple advanced persistent threat (APT) groups likely compromised the organization, some of them gaining initial access through the victim's Microsoft Exchange Server in January last year.</p> <p>Entities in the Defense Industrial Base Sector provide products and services that enable support and deployment of military operations.</p> <p>They are engaged in the research, development, design, production, delivery, and maintenance of military weapons systems, including all necessary components and parts.</p> <p>ProxyLogon, RAT, and custom malware</p>

A joint report from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency (CISA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the National Security Agency (NSA) provides technical details collected during incident response activity that lasted between November 2021 and January 2022.

The hackers combined custom malware called CovalentStealer, the open-source Impacket collection of Python classes, the HyperBro remote access trojan (RAT), and well over a dozen ChinaChopper webshell samples.

They also exploited the [ProxyLogon collection](#) of four vulnerabilities for Exchange Server around the time Microsoft released an emergency security update to fix them.

At the time, Microsoft had detected the ProxyLogon exploit chain when the vulnerabilities were zero days (unknown to the vendor), in attacks attributed to a Chinese state-sponsored hacking group they call Hafnium.

- [CVE-2021-26855](#) is a server-side request forgery (SSRF) vulnerability in Exchange that allows sending arbitrary HTTP requests and authenticating as the Exchange server
- [CVE-2021-26857](#) is an insecure deserialization vulnerability in the Unified Messaging service. Hafnium used it to run code as SYSTEM on the Exchange server
- [CVE-2021-26858](#) is a post-authentication arbitrary file write vulnerability in Exchange. It could be exploited after compromising a legitimate admin's credentials.
- [CVE-2021-27065](#) is a post-authentication arbitrary file write vulnerability in Exchange

While the initial access vector is unknown, the current advisory notes that the hackers gained access to the organization's Exchange Server in mid-January 2021.

Within four hours, the threat actor started mailbox searches and used a compromised administrator account belonging to a former employee to access the Exchange Web Services (EWS) API, which is used for sending and receiving web service messages from client applications.

Less than a month later, in early February 2021, the attackers accessed the network again using the same admin credentials through a virtual private network (VPN) connection.

After four days, the hackers engaged in reconnaissance activity using command shell. They learned about the victim's environment and manually archived (WinRAR) sensitive data, e.g. contract-related information stored on shared drives, preparing it for exfiltration.

"These files were split into approximately 3MB chunks located on the Microsoft Exchange server within the `CU2\he\debug` directory" - [joint report](#) from CISA, FBI, and NSA

At the beginning of March, the hackers exploited the ProxyLogon vulnerabilities to install no less than 17 China Chopper webshells on the Exchange Server.

China Chopper carries powerful capabilities in a very small package (just 4 kilobytes). It was initially used by Chinese threat actors but it became so popular that other groups adopted it.

Activity to establish persistence on the network and to move laterally started in April 2021 and was possible Impacket, which allows working with network protocols.

CISA says that the attacker used Impacket with the compromised credentials to obtain a service account with higher privileges, which enabled remote access from multiple external IP addresses to the organization's Exchange server through Outlook Web Access (OWA).

Accessing the remote Exchange Server was done through services from two VPN and virtual private server providers, M247 and SurfShark, a common tactic to hide the interaction with the victim network.

Burrowed deeply in the victim network, the hackers relied on the custom-built CovalentStealer to upload additional sensitive files to a Microsoft OneDrive location between late July and mid-October 2022.

In a separate report, CISA provides [technical analysis for CovalentStealer](#) noting that the malware relies on code from two publicly available utilities, ClientUploader and the PowerShell script Export-MFT, to upload compressed files and to extract the Master File Table (MFT) of a local storage volume.

CovalentStealer also contains resources for encrypting and decrypting the uploaded data, and configuration files, and to secure communications.

CovalentStealer AES encryption routine

CISA shares [technical details for the HyperBro RAT](#) in distinct report, saying that the capabilities of the malware include uploading and downloading files to and from the system, logging keystrokes, executing commands on the infected host, and bypassing User Account Control protection to run with full admin privileges.

The U.S. government at this time does not provide an indication about the origin of the threat actors but notes that “CISA uncovered that likely multiple APT groups compromised the organization’s network.”

A set of recommendations are available in the joint report for detecting persistent, long-term access threat activity, one of them being to monitor logs for connections from unusual VPSs and VPNs.

Defenders should also examine connections from unexpected ranges and, for this particular attacker, check for machines hosted by SurfShark and M247.

Monitoring for suspicious account use, such as inappropriate or unauthorized use of administrator accounts, service accounts, or third-party accounts, is also on the list.

The use of compromised credentials with a VPS may also indicate a potential breach that could be uncovered by:

- Reviewing logs for "impossible logins," e.g. logins with changing username, user agent strings, and IP address combinations or logins where IP addresses do not align to the expected user’s geographic location
- Searching for "impossible travel," which occurs when a user logs in from multiple IP addresses that are a significant geographic distance apart. False positives can result from this when legitimate users connect through a VPN
- Searching for one IP used across multiple accounts, excluding expected logins (successful remote logins from M247 and SurfShark IPs may be a red flag)
- Identifying suspicious privileged account use after resetting passwords or applying user account mitigations
- Searching for unusual activity in typically dormant accounts
- Searching for unusual user agent strings, such as strings not typically associated with normal user activity, which may indicate bot activity

The joint [report from CISA, FBI, and NSA](#) shares a set of YARA rules created to detect activity from this particular threat actor and indicators of compromise for the tools used in the attack: [CovalentStealer](#), [HyperBro](#), and [China Chopper](#).

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HEADLINE	10/04 Ex-NSA employee faces death penalty
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/ex--nsa-employee-faces-death-penalty-for-selling-secrets
GIST	When he left his job as an information systems security designer with the National Security Agency, Jareh Sebastian Dalke allegedly took a few classified documents with him. Stealing — and then attempting to sell — those secret government documents could land the Colorado Springs man on death row.

	<p>Dalke has been charged with trying to sell those government secrets to a foreign government. The sale went bust when it turned out the potential buyer Dalke believed was an emissary from a foreign nation was an undercover FBI agent instead, according to a Department of Justice affidavit.</p> <p>The DOJ said Dalke approached the undercover agent in late July and that the information he had for sale was "highly sensitive information relating to foreign targeting of U.S. systems and information on U.S. cyber operations, among other topics."</p> <p>Dalke then provided the perspective buyer with excerpts of the documents, which were sensitive and secret in nature.</p> <p>"Dalke represented to the undercover FBI agent that he was still employed by the U.S. government but said he was on a temporary assignment at a field location," the DOJ added. "Dalke requested compensation via a specific type of cryptocurrency in exchange for the information he possessed and stated that he was in financial need."</p> <p>Dalke approached the agent again to sell secret information he claimed to have in his possession in late August. This time the FBI set up a secure location for him to transmit the secret documents on Sept. 28, where he was arrested. He is now being charged under the Espionage Act, according to DOJ.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 BEC scammer gets 25yr jail sentence
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2022/10/bec-scammer-gets-25-year-jail-sentence.html?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>A 46-year-old man in the U.S. has been sentenced to 25 years in prison after being found guilty of laundering over \$9.5 million accrued by carrying out cyber-enabled financial fraud.</p> <p>Elvis Eghosa Ogiekpolor of Norcross, Georgia, operated a money laundering network that opened at least 50 business bank accounts for illicitly receiving funds from unsuspecting individuals and businesses after falling victim to romance frauds and business email compromise (BEC) scams.</p> <p>Ogiekpolor was charged by a federal grand jury in February 2022 with one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering and 15 counts of substantive money laundering. The scheme was operational from October 2018 to August 2020.</p> <p>According to the U.S. Justice Department (DoJ), Ogiekpolor enlisted the help of eight "money mules" to open the phony bank accounts under the names of non-existent companies, which were subsequently used to stash the proceeds from their criminal activities.</p> <p>These included creating fictitious personas on online dating sites to initiate conversations with potential targets, before tricking them into wiring funds directly into one of the sham accounts or mailing the cash to the money mules.</p> <p>"Once the fraud proceeds posted to his accounts, Ogiekpolor laundered the funds, including wiring hundreds of thousands of dollars to overseas accounts, and withdrawing substantial amounts in cash and cashier's checks," the DoJ said, adding the scam targeted retired widows or widowers.</p> <p>In one instance of BEC compromise highlighted by the agency, a victim business was deceived into making a payment to the tune of "several hundreds of thousands of dollars" to what it believed was a "long-standing vendor."</p> <p>BEC attacks are typically executed by sending spear-phishing email messages that purport to be from a known source that has ongoing contracts with the targeted victims and asking them to transfer funds to a different account under the cybercriminals' control.</p>

	<p>Ogiekpolor's sentencing follows the conviction of five of his co-conspirators, all of whom have been accused of conspiracy to commit money laundering and have since pleaded guilty to the crime.</p> <p>"There is no way we can make the victims of Ogiekpolor and this network whole again, but we hope this sentence will at least give them solace that people are being held accountable," said Keri Farley, special agent in charge of FBI Atlanta.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/05 Ransomware affiliate sentenced 20yrs jail
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2022/10/canadian-netwalker-ransomware-affiliate.html?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>A former affiliate of the Netwalker ransomware has been sentenced to 20 years in prison in the U.S., a little over three months after the Canadian national pleaded guilty to his role in the crimes.</p> <p>Sebastien Vachon-Desjardins, 35, has also been ordered to forfeit \$21,500,000 that was illicitly obtained from dozens of victims globally, including companies, municipalities, hospitals, law enforcement, emergency services, school districts, colleges, and universities.</p> <p>Launched in 2019, the Netwalker attacks particularly singled out the healthcare sector during the COVID-19 pandemic, opportunistically taking advantage of the situation to extort money from victims.</p> <p>"The defendant in this case used sophisticated technological means to exploit hundreds of victims in numerous countries at the height of an international health crisis," U.S. Attorney Roger B. Handberg for the Middle District of Florida said.</p> <p>Vachon-Desjardins, an IT engineer working for the Canadian government was extradited to the U.S. earlier this March. A month before that, an Ontario court awarded him a jail term of six years and eight months.</p> <p>The defendant was arrested by Canadian law enforcement officers in the city of Quebec on January 27, 2022, leading to the seizure of \$742,840 in Canadian currency and 719 bitcoin, which was valued at \$21,849,087 back then and \$14,463,993 as of today.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 No prison Seattle hacker in \$250M breach
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/no-prison-for-seattle-hacker-behind-capital-one-250m-data-breach/
GIST	<p>The former Amazon engineer whose 2019 hack compromised 100 million credit card users' accounts won't spend any additional time in jail.</p> <p>Convicted in June on seven hacking-related charges, Seattle resident Paige Thompson was sentenced Tuesday to time served and five years of probation for violating an anti-hacking law known as the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act.</p> <p>Thompson, 37, was responsible for one of the largest data breaches in U.S. history. She downloaded data from more than 100 million Capital One users, including 120,000 Social Security numbers and about 77,000 bank account numbers. U.S. Attorney Nick Brown said Thompson "did more than \$250 million in damage to companies and individuals."</p> <p>Prosecutors argued successfully that Thompson used a software tool she built via Amazon Web Services to look for misconfigured accounts. She then used the accounts to hack and download the data of more than 30 entities, including Capital One. The bank's internal system recognized Thompson's queries as coming from a "friendly" computer, so it fulfilled her data requests.</p> <p>Arrested in July 2019, Thompson remained jailed until November of that year.</p>

In 2020, Capital One [agreed to pay \\$80 million](#) to settle federal bank regulators' claims that it lacked security measures it needed to protect customers' information. In December, the bank [settled for \\$190 million a class-action lawsuit](#) filed by customers whose data was exposed in the breach.

At the sentencing hearing, U.S. District Judge Robert Lasnik said time in prison would be particularly difficult for Thompson because of her well-documented mental health issues and because she is transgender.

Thompson had contended she was attempting to collect a bounty for spotting the vulnerability in the systems of the companies she hacked. Such payments are sometimes paid to "white hat" hackers, who try to identify and mend vulnerabilities in companies' online defenses.

"She wanted data, she wanted money and she wanted to brag," Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrew Friedman said in closing arguments.

In a letter advocating for Thompson, a friend wrote that "Paige saw a situation where the information on which the financial system depends for its security was left utterly unguarded by its custodians."

The individual also wrote that while Thompson was wrong for not reporting it, "any random person with a computer could commit nearly limitless fraud."

Other supporters wrote that Thompson struggled with substance abuse and dependence as a way to self-medicate for her mental health.

The defense said during the trial that her actions were legal because the breached companies' systems performed as they were programmed.

A jury in Seattle convicted Thompson on counts of wire fraud, unauthorized access to a protected computer and damaging a protected computer following an eight-day trial. The hearing to determine the restitution amount Thompson must pay is scheduled for Dec. 1.

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HEADLINE	10/04 Hospitals, clinics networks remain offline
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article266804656.html
GIST	<p>Computer networks remained offline Tuesday at hospitals and clinics in the Virginia Mason Franciscan Health system in Tacoma and across Puget Sound and other parts of the country following an IT security incident involving its parent company.</p> <p>A statement from Virginia Mason Franciscan Health on Monday acknowledged that Chicago-based CommonSpirit Health was "managing an IT security incident which is impacting some of our facilities."</p> <p>The health system's computer network remained down Tuesday morning, with health care workers telling The News Tribune that the disruption was having serious impact on normal functions such as charting, lab results reporting, history gathering, obtaining records on allergy information and more.</p> <p>The patient portal MyChart also remained offline.</p> <p>"Staff and MDs are making do with circa-1980s paper charting," said one tipster working at St. Anthony Hospital in Gig Harbor, who asked to remain anonymous for fear of retribution.</p> <p>"We don't have any access to the electronic medical record. We can't pull it up. We can't get patients' histories," the employee told The News Tribune in a phone interview. "We can't order things or put orders in from pharmacy. It's all a paper record going on right now."</p>

He added, "It's just not a good situation to be getting care because everything happens much more slowly and inefficiently."

He noted that the employees had not been told anything more than it was an IT incident.

The outage appeared to be affecting medical sites nationwide under the CommonSpirit Health operating umbrella, including North Dakota, Nebraska, Tennessee, Texas and Iowa, based on media reports from those states.

VMFH hospitals in the Puget Sound area include St. Clare in Lakewood; St. Joseph and CHI Franciscan Rehabilitation Hospital, both in Tacoma; St. Elizabeth in Enumclaw; St. Anthony in Gig Harbor; St. Michael in Silverdale; Virginia Mason Hospital and Seattle Medical Center in Seattle; St. Anne in Burien; and St. Francis in Federal Way.

VMFH in a statement Monday said certain online systems had been taken down as a precautionary measure, and that some patients faced rescheduling.

Robert Layfield, a local patient, told The News Tribune via email that rescheduling was an issue.

"As a patient, they are unable to see my appointments nor have information to call patients to reschedule," he told The News Tribune via email. "I went in Monday for appointment and found it canceled."

He said he'd waited six months for the appointment and was unable to reschedule with the system down.

"All the staff were very helpful, and seemed frustrated as well," he added.

Inside the CHI Franciscan Family Medicine Clinic in Bremerton on Tuesday, front desk receptionists were using paper lists to mark off patients as they arrived for appointments, and physicians were writing patient history notes on clipboards upon intake.

Staff said they did not know when the computer network would be back online.

CommonSpirit Health formed in 2019 through alignment of Catholic Health Initiatives and Dignity Health. It has become one of the largest nonprofit health systems in the U.S., with more than 1,000 care sites in 21 states, serving 20 million patients, according to its website.

Virginia Mason Franciscan Health completed the merger of their Seattle and Tacoma-based health systems in January 2021.

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Terrorism, Extremism

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HEADLINE	10/04 Chicago terrorism case plot twist
SOURCE	https://abc7chicago.com/adel-daoud-sentence-terrorism-doud-plea/12295499/
GIST	<p>CHICAGO (WLS) -- A Chicago terrorism case marked by one decade of peculiar twists and bizarre turns has taken the oddest direction yet.</p> <p>Adel Daoud was a Hillside teenager who talked about "lizard people," "cosmic aliens," the Illuminati and he called his judge "a reptilian overlord." Now, Daoud is trying to turn away from a guilty plea deal that many thought was his best way out of a 2012 terrorism case that could have landed him in prison for decades.</p>

Adel Daoud's mental competency has been a legal question since early in the case. Daoud was 17 years old when he popped onto FBI radar as a potential terror threat. The west suburban teen was taken down in a sting operation when he tried to detonate what he thought was a 1,000 pound bomb outside a Loop tavern.

His attorney Thomas Durkin managed to obtain court approval for what is known as an "Alford Plea," a rare legal tactic in which Daoud was allowed to sidestep federal trial and make no admission of guilt while still admitting the government had the goods on him.

Now, several years into a 16-year sentence, a new attorney has filed a motion on his behalf asking that the plea deal be thrown out and a trial held.

The odds of that happening are slim according to a former federal prosecutor in Chicago and ABC7 legal analyst Gil Soffer.

"One, here's a defendant who has already been serving many years in jail. Second, he was represented by very competent counsel years ago when he was sentenced to strike a good deal for him. Third, to withdraw a plea now would cause prejudice arguably, to the government, if the conclusion of it is to retry him now that years have passed and memories have faded. So the odds are stacked against that," Soffer said.

Soffer says that an attorney only has to represent their client's current best interest and that Daoud's delusional thoughts over the years-including some in phone calls with the I-Team alleging that the government is run by lizard people-would have no bearing on asking that a plea deal be tossed.

"It may be particularly be the case here that if this defendant were to go to trial, he could look at a much worse outcome," said Soffer.

Daoud is being held in the MCC in downtown Chicago and is scheduled to be released in 2026. His attorney did not return a I-Team request for comment.

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HEADLINE	10/05 Women fueling ISIS comeback
SOURCE	https://the arabweekly.com/women-are-fuelling-isiss-comeback
GIST	<p>On August 28, Syrian Kurdish security forces backed by the United States launched an operation targeting ISIS sleeper cells in the Al-Hol camp, in northeast Syria. The mission was intended to stabilise the detention facility, which holds thousands of internally-displaced people and families of suspected ISIS members.</p> <p>But more than a month after the raids began and despite hundreds of arrests ISIS remains entrenched in Al-Hol. Violence in the camp has reached record levels and at least 44 people have been killed this year in ISIS-initiated attacks.</p> <p>The failure of Kurdish security efforts is largely due to an overreliance on targeting male ISIS leaders and operatives. Unlike in 2014, when male fighters led the militant group's seizing of territory in Iraq, Syria and beyond, today it is ISIS's female supporters who are expanding influence. Unless this shift is understood correctly, the group's ascendancy inside Al-Hol and its reemergence outside, is all but guaranteed.</p> <p>Historically, the role of women in violent extremist groups, and ISIS in particular, has been domestic and focussed on supporting husbands and children. Women have been used in terrorist operations or suicide bombings if the religious authorities permit it. And ISIS has allowed women to work, including as doctors, teachers and religious police. But during its height, the group urged most women to stick to roles inside the home.</p> <p>Things changed dramatically after ISIS's territorial defeat in 2019. With male members either dead, detained or on the run, ISIS female supporters took it upon themselves to keep the group's ideology alive.</p>

The creation of Al-Hol, which holds some [56,000 individuals](#) from various nations, the vast majority of whom is women and children, made their task easier. In addition to the high concentration of like-minded people in one place, the absence of male supervision inside the camp has allowed ISIS female supporters to take the lead and mirror ISIS practices.

One of the most concerning developments in Al-Hol is the indoctrination of children by pro-ISIS women. About 28,000 children inside the camp are reportedly living without access to proper education. Benefiting from this vacuum, ISIS female supporters have [established makeshift schools](#) to inculcate young people with ISIS ideology.

These schools teach up to five levels. In addition to sharia courses, older children are [provided ideological and military training](#). Sadly, the camp residents' home governments view the children [as threats](#) rather than victims, which explains the lack of effort to rescue them from this ideological upbringing. Hence, analysts and officials fear that Al-Hol is being used as a "[breeding ground](#)" for the next generation of ISIS.

Women ISIS members have also formed "hesba," a religious police unit, to uphold ISIS ideology and impose its norms on other women in the camp. This force has reportedly [made women wear the veil](#) and attend informal sharia courses. It also prohibits smoking, dancing, listening to music, wearing trousers and talking to men.

Pro-ISIS women have even [established their own sharia court](#), modelled on ISIS's judicial system, to hold accountable those who violate the group's religious teachings. [Punishments include](#) flogging, imprisonment, torture, food deprivation, burning of tents and murder.

For now, the influence of ISIS's women supporters is primarily limited to the camp. During the group's rise, women were largely excluded from propaganda produced by ISIS's central media machine. In Al-Hol, they initiate their own [online campaigns](#) to promote ISIS ideology and disseminate its propaganda.

But the women of ISIS have been able to launch campaigns to collect donations from outside Al-Hol. This funding, which is largely transferred through the informal hawala money transfer system, is used to cover expenses and pay smugglers to help them escape. Eventually, these revenue streams could fund activities beyond the camp's perimeter fence.

Despite being aware of these practices, security forces seem unable to act. That is partially a result of how new these female-led structures are, which makes them difficult to detect.

Additionally, fear of reprisals and hard living conditions inside the camp make residents less willing to cooperate with authorities. As a result, recent security operations have been limited to confiscating weapons and propaganda materials, disturbing ISIS's networks and shutting down the infrastructure used by female ISIS supporters (such as tunnels, trenches, schools and sharia centers).

Anti-ISIS security operations inside Al-Hol will only reap results if the women-led structures promoting the group's ideology are properly identified and countered. Rehabilitating and reintegrating ISIS supporters, inside and outside the camp, is essential for ensuring the group's enduring defeat. Without these actions, Al-Hol and other camps like it will continue to play a key role in the continued existence of ISIS.

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HEADLINE	10/04 Terrorists use humor to reinforce identity
SOURCE	https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20221004-terrorists-use-humor-in-englishlanguage-propaganda-magazines-to-reinforce-identity
GIST	Humor is used in English-language jihadi terrorist magazines to reinforce identity and help groups bond, research suggests.

The study shows Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and Tahrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) use humor in a similar way, using situational comedy, while humor in Islamic State (IS) magazines is dehumanizing and mocking.

Academics examined 82 jihadi magazines published in English. They found Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in particular use mockery and parody to galvanize the curious by placing emphasis on an “us versus them” mentality. This usually includes aggressive imagery of people or countries as animals.

These groups repeatedly used the term ‘dog’ to describe President Bush, ‘donkey’ to describe Americans and vermin to describe US troops. ISIS labelled Joe Biden as ‘the Senile Crusader’. Former Israeli Prime Minister’s surname ‘Netanyahu’ was turned into ‘Rottenyahu’ by Al-Qaeda.

TTP is more likely than ISIS, the Taliban and Al-Qaeda to resort to ironic and sarcastic humor. Al Qaeda is less likely than any group to use sarcastic humor, usually to ridicule enemies.

The research, published in the journal [*Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*](#), was carried out by [Dr Weeda Mehran](#) from the University of Exeter and her MA students [Megan Byrne](#), [Ella Gibbs-Pearce](#), [Archie Macfarlane](#), [Jacob Minihane](#) and [Amy Ranger](#).

Dr Mehran said: “Propaganda is used to encourage jihad but it serves a much bigger purpose and humor is a key part. We found the use of three different types of humor – de-humanizing, sarcastic/and situational. ISIS was more likely to use dehumanizing humor – portraying rivals as robots or animals and mocking them. This sets them apart from other groups who are more likely to use sarcasm and irony.

“Situational humor is used strategically to enrich narratives of past events and develop a religious rationale for conducting jihad, as well as motivating individuals to carry out their own operations. This humor emphasizes the comradery and brotherhood of carrying out ‘*istishhadi*’ missions and depict perilous and dangerous operations & efforts as peaceful, even joyful.

“Jihadi media strategy uses situational humor to create solidarity – these are in-jokes often-only understood by those who understand the jihadi ideology and political outlook so it helps create a shared identity. Shared humor creates an environment that fosters internal cohesion and creates social bonding.”

The study says the regularity of dehumanizing humor in ISIS’s magazines reflects their overall aggressive and uncompromising stance on outsiders and opponents.

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HEADLINE	10/04 Extremists target critical infrastructure
SOURCE	https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20221004-violent-extremists-terrorists-targeting-u-s-critical-infrastructure
GIST	<p>The George Washington University’s Program on Extremism has just released a report — Mayhem, Murder, and Misdirection: Violent Extremist Attack Plots Against Critical Infrastructure in the United States, 2016-2022, written by Ilana Krill and Bennett Clifford – analyzing plots by extremists against the U.S. critical infrastructure.</p> <p>Here are the study’s Executive Summary, Introduction, and Conclusions:</p> <p>Executive Summary</p> <p>In the United States, critical infrastructure, or “assets, systems, and networks, whether physical or virtual, [that] are considered so vital to the United States that their incapacitation or destruction would have a debilitating effect on security, national economic security, national public health or safety, or any combination thereof,” are prime targets in violent extremist attack plots.(1) While a variety of violent extremist movements have attempted to assault American critical infrastructure throughout modern</p>

history, the Department of Homeland Security and other national security authorities have recently sounded the alarm that U.S.-based violent extremists have developed “credible, specific plans” to attack critical infrastructure.(2)

To understand the current dimensions of this threat, this paper reviews 94 cases of individuals charged in the U.S. federal court system from 2016 to 2022 with planning to conduct violent extremist attacks, 35 of whom attempted to attack critical infrastructure systems. 19 of these cases are associated with the Salafi-jihadist movement; 16 are associated with white supremacist groups. Evaluating these cases, the report finds:

- Salafi-jihadist attack planners were significantly more likely to consider critical infrastructure systems as targets for attack than their white supremacist counterparts.
- Salafi-jihadist and white supremacist attack planners attempted to target different critical infrastructure sectors, with the former focusing on the commercial facilities, government facilities, and emergency services sectors, and the latter predominantly focusing on the energy sector.
- Since 2019, white supremacist attacks plots against critical infrastructure systems have distinctly increased.
- Between 2016 and 2022, white supremacist plots targeting energy systems dramatically increased in frequency. 13 individuals associated with the movement were arrested and charged in federal court with planning attacks on the energy sector; 11 of these attack planners were charged after 2020.
- The rise of accelerationist ideology and doctrine during the past decade likely fueled the increased risk of attack plots within white supremacist milieus targeting critical infrastructure, and the energy sector in particular.

Introduction

In their attempts to use violent force against civilian targets to achieve political aims, violent extremists of all backgrounds frequently choose critical infrastructure systems as targets. Simply defined, critical infrastructure comprises facilities and assets that are essential for the normal functioning of day-to-day life within a country. In the United States, a wide-reaching swath of sectors of the U.S. economy are considered critical infrastructure, from energy and transportation to agriculture and public health. The logic of terrorism targeting critical infrastructure is almost self-explanatory. Because the disruption of critical infrastructure sectors would, by the very nature of the targets in question, impede “business as usual” for large parts of American society and the U.S. government, extremists who seek to accomplish this aim tend to view critical infrastructure as an attractive target.(3)

Following this logic, violent extremists and terrorist organizations of numerous ideological persuasions have conducted devastating attacks on critical infrastructure in the United States. Notably, this type of attack plotting is not the sole purview of any single individual, group, or extremist movement. Regardless of ideological persuasion, terrorist attacks on critical infrastructure are ordered towards three different (but not mutually exclusive) goals. Some see targeting critical infrastructure as an efficient means of generating mass casualties during the commission of the attack. Large groups of individuals gather at particular types of facilities associated with critical infrastructure sectors and can be targeted en masse, and some attackers perceive certain kinds of critical infrastructure as less protected than others, making them easy targets. Others, understanding that a potent hit to a critical infrastructure facility can generate a wide-reaching societal disaster, target critical infrastructure to induce panic, fear, or terror in society as a pretext for gaining further support for their cause. Finally, some attackers believe that the aftermath of a successful attack on critical infrastructure will force the government to redirect national security and emergency response resources, creating a diversion that can free up space for further attack planning.(4)

Today’s terrorism threat picture in the U.S. is incredibly fluid, dynamic, and dangerous, and under this backdrop authorities are increasingly worried about an uptick in terrorist plotting against critical infrastructure. The two types of actors at the forefront of these types of planning are domestic violent extremists (DVE) and homegrown violent extremists (HVE), and the Department of Homeland Security warns that these actors increasingly “[view] attacks against U.S. critical infrastructure as a means to create chaos and advance ideological goals.”(5) Because of this renewed focus and concern, this paper reviews white supremacist DVE and Salafi-jihadist HVE attack planning against critical infrastructure during the past six years, ascertaining the current trends and differences in how these actors plan their attacks and

their motivations for doing so.(6) Salafi-jihadists and white supremacists are far from the only extremist movements operating in the U.S. who have demonstrated an interest in conducting attacks on critical infrastructure.(7) However, the report evaluates these two movements because according to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) they were the most lethal HVE and DVE groups, respectively, during the period of the study.(8) After an evaluation of previous studies on the terrorist threat to critical infrastructure, the report analyzes 35 cases from a dataset of 94 individuals charged in federal court with planning violent extremist attacks between 2016 and 2022, highlighting key trends and the potential future developments of violent extremist attack plotting against critical infrastructure.

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Conclusion

For the past twenty-five years, the protection of critical infrastructure from terrorist attacks has been a major homeland security priority across Presidential administrations. This correlates to waves of efforts by international and domestic terrorists to strike U.S. critical infrastructure sectors, with the goals of causing mass casualties through murder, societal chaos through mayhem, and/or obstruction of the U.S. counterterrorism mission through misdirection. Sadly, there are few signs in the American violent extremist landscape today that would suggest that reductions in vigilance or in efforts to improve the resiliency of critical assets are warranted. As new violent extremist movements, organizations, and threats come to the fore, the newest iterations of American HVE and DVE attack planners seem as interested as their predecessors in assaulting the systems and sectors that are necessary for the normal functioning of daily life in the U.S.

This report highlighted one of the reasons that American national security officials consider the current terrorism threat picture as one of the most combustible and deadly in decades, namely the continued efforts by American violent extremists of all stripes to attack critical infrastructure. Salafi-jihadist HVE and white supremacist DVE attack planners are placing critical infrastructure at the top of their respective target lists, with approximately one out of every two jihadist attack plotters and one out of three white supremacists arrested during the past six years considering attacks on infrastructure. In distinct ways, these groups have spread out their targeting across a growing range of the economic, political, and societal sectors that make up America's critical assets, although each have developed special areas of focus. Perhaps the most specific of these threats came in the form of white supremacist attack plots against energy infrastructure, with 13 cases of individuals connected to white supremacist movements attempting to conduct attacks on power lines, the energy grid, and even a nuclear reactor site.

This anomaly in the data is not a coincidence, as for the past several years, white supremacist propaganda and its associated online ecosystem have both honed in on energy facilities, encouraging supporters of the movement to conduct attacks on energy supply, in the hopes that it will trigger a cataclysmic confrontation in American society and collapse the country from within. The rise of accelerationism, which is responsible for much of this paradigm shift within American white supremacist circles, is at play in examining many of the individuals' alleged motivations for seeking to attack energy systems. There are two takeaways from this finding for American counterterrorism officials. First, from a protective standpoint, sector-specific efforts focused on energy infrastructure security and resilience against violent extremist attacks may be prudent. An increase in information sharing between the U.S. government and third-party ownership of energy facilities about violent extremist threats can aid greatly in this endeavor, as can intra-government collaboration between DHS/CISA, the Department of Energy, and federal law enforcement agencies.(112)

At a more strategic level, the rise in targeting of critical infrastructure inspired by accelerationist ideology should be broadly concerning, because at its core accelerationist doctrine is ideologically agnostic and has been an inspiration for a wider degree of domestic violent extremists beyond white supremacists. If accelerationism—or the view that violence should be ordered towards the collapse of American society—begins to influence other extremist milieus, a potential result is a growing number of plots targeting critical infrastructure as a way of achieving that goal. Already, there are concerns that far-left and anarchist groups in the U.S. are continuing their historical legacy of targeting infrastructure for attack and sabotage, albeit with a modern accelerationist twist.(113) For example, in 2018 the FBI arrested two self-proclaimed Ohio anarchists, Elizabeth Lecron and Vincent Armstrong, who were plotting several terrorist attacks on local

	<p>targets of interest. One of these plots involved an attempt by the pair to construct an explosive device and bomb a local oil pipeline.(114)</p> <p>Moving forward, more research is necessary to determine how the efforts of other violent extremists to target critical infrastructure—especially DVEs influenced by conspiracy theories like QAnon, militia violent extremists, single-issue violent extremists (especially pro- and anti-abortion violent extremists and animal rights groups), and anarchist/far-left violent extremists—compare to the movements examined in this report. In addition, as national security officials consider the possibility of cyber-attacks targeting critical infrastructure, mainly from actors associated with foreign governments, risk assessments of violent extremist threat actors in this arena could add to the overall threat picture and provide a point of comparison between violent extremists’ physical and virtual attacks on critical infrastructure.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 AQ group claims Burkina Faso attack
SOURCE	https://www.voanews.com/a/al-qaida-branch-claims-attack-on-burkina-faso-convoy-dozens-killed-/6775975.html
GIST	<p>OUAGADOUGOU — The Sahel-based branch of al-Qaida, Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM), has claimed an attack on a convoy in Burkina Faso that killed more than a dozen soldiers last month, the SITE Intelligence Group said Tuesday.</p> <p>Islamist militants attacked a convoy taking supplies to a town in northern Burkina Faso on September 26, days before the West African country was hit by its second military takeover this year.</p> <p>JNIM claimed credit for the ambush and said it "caused significant economic losses to the enemy and 'led to a shakeup' in the Burkinabe army ranks, culminating in the military coup," the SITE statement said.</p> <p>Eleven soldiers were found dead and about 50 civilians were reported missing after the attack, the previous government said.</p> <p>But an internal security document seen by Reuters on Tuesday gave a death toll of 27 soldiers.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	10/04 Mediterranean Sea forms carbonate crystals
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/the-mediterranean-sea-is-so-hot-its-forming-carbonate-crystals/
GIST	<p>IF YOU STAND on the coast of Israel and gaze out across the Mediterranean Sea, you’ll spy deep-blue, calm waters that have sustained humans for millennia. Beneath the surface, though, something odd is unfolding: A process called stratification is messing with the way the sea processes carbon dioxide.</p> <p>Think of this part of the Mediterranean as a cake made of liquid, essentially. Fierce sunlight heats the top layer of water that sits on cooler, deeper layers below. Out in the open ocean, where water temperatures are lower, CO₂ dissolves in saltwater—which is what allows Earth’s seas to collectively absorb a quarter of the carbon emissions that humans pump into the atmosphere. But as the eastern Mediterranean Sea heats up in the summer, it can no longer absorb that gas and instead starts releasing it.</p> <p>It’s the same thing that happens in a bottle of soda that is carbonated with carbon dioxide. “You usually keep it cold, so the dissolved gasses will stay dissolved,” says Or Bialik, a geoscientist at the University of Münster in Germany. “If you leave it in your car for a while and try to open it, all the gasses are going to pop out at once, because when it warms, the capacity of the fluid to hold CO₂ goes down.” <i>Boom, fizz,</i> you’ve got a mess on your hands.</p>

In the Eastern Mediterranean, this dynamic is rather more consequential for the climate than a sticky car interior, as the sea begins burping up great quantities of CO₂ that the water can no longer hold. And Bialik and his colleagues have discovered that these warming, stratifying waters teem with a second carbon problem: The team recently caught aragonite crystals in sediment traps. Aragonite is a form of calcium carbonate, which oceanic creatures like snails use to build their shells. Except in the [increasingly hot Eastern Mediterranean](#), the aragonite is forming abiotically. That's another sign that the water is getting so warm that it's releasing its carbon load.

In these hot, shallow, stable waters, the fluid on top doesn't mix much with the underlying colder layers, in contrast to deeper parts of the ocean, where upwelling brings up cooler H₂O. "The conditions are so extreme that we can definitely generate calcium carbonate chemically from these waters, which was kind of a shock for us," says Bialik, who coauthored a recent [paper](#) describing the discovery in the journal *Scientific Reports*. (He did the research while at the University of Malta and University of Haifa.) "It's basically like a beaker that sits there for a very long time, and it's long enough to get these reactions going and start generating these crystals."

It's like the experiments you might have done as a kid with sugar crystals. You added a bunch of sugar to water, saturating it. Nothing happened until you dropped in a string, which allowed the sugar to precipitate into fat clusters that clung to the string. Similarly, when the Mediterranean heats up and stratifies, it's saturated with carbonate. How exactly the aragonite reactions get going, Bialik and his colleagues can't yet say, but they may start with nuclei like specks of dust blown off nearby land, upon which the layers of aragonite build into crystals—a very tiny version of the string in the sugar water.

It's also worth noting that the Mediterranean Sea is one of the most microplastic-polluted water bodies in the world: In 2020, scientists [reported finding 2 million particles](#) in a single square meter of sediment that was only 5 centimeters thick. Whether aragonite crystals are forming around [microplastics](#) floating in the water column, Bialik doesn't know. "They could probably form around any nucleation center," says Bialik. "I suspect that microplastics may also be a possible one. But as scientists love to say, more research is needed."

What Bialik and his colleagues *can* say, though, is that as these crystals form, they release CO₂. So much so, Bialik calculates, that they account for perhaps 15 percent of the gas that the Mediterranean Sea emits to the atmosphere.

As the sea warms up and loses its CO₂, both from the water belching it up and from the proliferating crystals, its acidity actually goes *down*. This is the opposite process from the one that's causing widespread ocean acidification: As humans spew more CO₂ into the atmosphere, the oceans absorb more of it, and the ensuing chemical reaction raises acidity. Acidification makes it harder for organisms like corals and snails (which are known collectively as calcifiers), to build shells or exoskeletons out of calcium carbonate. But as the Mediterranean warms and releases its absorbed carbon back into the atmosphere, it gets more basic, reversing that acidification.

That should be great for the calcifiers, right? Not necessarily. "Many of them have specific temperature ranges in which they can build their shells—not too hot, not too cold," says Bialik. So even if the sea is getting less acidic as it warms, that heat stresses these organisms in a different way. (Not to mention the stress of being constantly exposed to [extreme levels of microplastics](#).)

It's not clear whether aragonite crystals are forming in more places around the world. Scientists are already aware of "whiting events," in which calcium carbonate precipitates in much more obvious ways, turning the waters around the Bahamas and in the Persian Gulf a milky color. In the Eastern Mediterranean, there wasn't an obvious whiting event to clue in Bialik and his colleagues. Instead, they stumbled upon the crystals in their sediment traps.

"This is a somewhat unique area with a variety of conditions that have to happen to make this work," says marine chemist Andrew Dickson of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, who wasn't involved in the

research. “The question then is, to what degree is that environment really special, or is it common around the oceans? And I don't have a clear picture of that in my mind.”

It may be that the conditions in the eastern Mediterranean aren't replicated in many other places, so Dickson is leaning toward the idea that this may not be particularly common. But Bialik points out that wherever it may be happening, it could be causing a climate problem: Aragonite crystal formation may mess with the water's ability to absorb atmospheric CO₂, thus interfering with how the ocean reduces levels of the planet-heating gas.

“I won't say we fully understand this yet and fully understand what governs it—when it turns on and when it shuts down,” says Bialik. “We didn't even think this process occurs on this scale in open waters, in normal marine conditions. And so we still have a lot that we need to understand about it.”

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HEADLINE	10/04 South Asia monsoon more violent, erratic
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/10/04/climate/south-asia-monsoon-climate-change.html
GIST	<p>Like all of India's tens of millions of small farmers whose lives depend on the annual monsoon, Bhagwat Gagre keeps a firm eye on the sky.</p> <p>At his village in the shadow of the Western Ghats mountain range, the rainy season usually starts in June. Winds over the subcontinent reverse, as they have for millennia, carrying clouds ripe with water from the Arabian Sea up over the Ghats, soaking Mr. Gagre's tiny farm in Kumbharwadi and ensuring that the crops that he and his wife sow will have the rain they need.</p> <p>Now, however, across South Asia, climate change is making the monsoon more erratic, less dependable and even dangerous, with more violent rainfall as well as worsening dry spells. For a region home to nearly one-quarter of the world's population, the consequences are dire.</p> <p>At Mr. Gagre's farm in late August, dryness was the problem — the monsoon had begun to feel all but absent. “If we don't get rain in the next 15 or 20 days,” he said, gesturing to his fields, “productivity will go down 50 percent.”</p> <p>In other parts of South Asia, the problem was too much rain, too quickly. Pakistan, to India's northwest, was struck by relentless downpours, leaving much of the nation underwater and killing at least 1,500 people. In Bengaluru, India's tech capital, devastating rains in early September forced workers to use boats instead of cars in the streets.</p> <p>Scientists blame global warming from the burning of fossil fuels for the changes in the monsoon. Computer models suggest that as this warming continues, the monsoon will strengthen, with more rain overall.</p> <p>But the scientists also see what farmers like Mr. Gagre are experiencing: greater uncertainty.</p> <p>“The heavy rainfall events are increasing at a rapid pace,” said Roxy Mathew Koll, a climate scientist at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology in Pune. “That is a very, very clear shift that we see in monsoon patterns.”</p> <p>But the monsoon is much more than rain — it's a collective mood, a shared experience across communities and across time, and deeply ingrained. Artists and poets have tried to capture it for centuries. Novelists use it as a plot device, and it provides rainy, romantic interludes in countless Bollywood movies. And the monsoon is an economic force, particularly for the small farmers who get three-quarters, or more, of their annual rainfall from it.</p> <p>A good monsoon can bring plenty, a bad monsoon, hardship. And in the past, a terrible monsoon could bring famine.</p>

The monsoon is becoming more erratic because of a basic bit of science: Warmer air holds more moisture. The moisture accumulates in the atmosphere and can stay there longer, increasing the length of dry spells. But then, when it does rain, “it dumps all that moisture in a very short time,” Dr. Koll said. “It can be a month’s rainfall or a week’s rainfall in a few hours to a few days.”

Mr. Gagre farms in a drylands region. Because he lives in the shadow of the Ghats, the monsoon brings less rain — the mountains wring most of the moisture from the clouds before it can reach his farm. For him, longer dry spells are a big threat.

To cope, villagers have dug long, meandering trenches by hand along the hillsides, the better to catch the rain that falls, prevent it from running off into streams and give it time to soak into the ground. That has helped to keep local wells from drying up after the monsoon is over.

And if the trenches and other water-conservation efforts had not worked? “Nobody would be living here today,” Mr. Gagre said.

A PALACE FOR THE CLOUDS

In the 1870s, Sajjan Singh, the teenage ruler of the Mewar region in western India, ordered the construction of a marble palace on a rugged hill above the lake city of Udaipur. The monsoon for him was a source of fascination, and the new palace would be a fine place to watch the clouds roll in.

Sajjan Singh didn’t live to see it finished — he died at 26, perhaps, it’s been said, of drink — but the building was completed by his successor. Tourists, mostly from India’s burgeoning middle class, are drawn to it today, cramming into taxis for the winding, bumpy ride up the hill.

Known as the Monsoon Palace, its eastern side offers a sweeping view of Udaipur and its glistening waters. But in summer the view from the opposite side is equally spectacular: the approach of moisture-laden monsoon clouds, scudding across the sky.

Those clouds are borne on winds from the southwest. And for a long time, that was most of what was known about the monsoon — it was caused by a shift in the winds that occurred in late spring and continued through summer. At least as far back as the first century, sailors had learned to take advantage of these winds, riding them from the Middle East across the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea to India.

It wasn’t until the 17th century that Edmond Halley, the English astronomer and meteorologist best known for the comet that bears his name, finally described the monsoon’s mechanism. The shift in the winds — the arrival of rain — was caused by seasonal changes in the relationship between ocean and land temperatures.

He was right. And remarkably, “His theory was entirely based on hearsay evidence,” said Ranjan Kelkar, a student of the monsoon who headed the India Meteorological Department from 1998 to 2003. “Halley had never come to India.”

By the time the Monsoon Palace was built, there was plenty of direct evidence. This was largely thanks to the British East India Company, which ruled the country for a century, until the mid-1800s. The company “did many bad things, but among the good things was that it set up rain gauges and observatories,” Dr. Kelkar said.

A succession of British, and later Indian, scientists divined more details of the monsoon, including how the rains occur as the moist ocean air hits the subcontinent, rises and cools, and the moisture condenses into raindrops.

Scientists now know that the monsoon is quite complex. Other theories of how it originates have been developed, including one that ties the monsoon to the northward shift of a zone of trade winds. But the basics, as Halley outlined, remain. An engine that drives it is the temperature difference between land and ocean.

In spring, as the Northern Hemisphere tilts toward the sun, the subcontinent heats faster than the ocean. As the air over the land warms, the air pressure drops, which draws in higher-pressure air from the ocean. “That temperature difference creates this pressure difference that drives this moisture-laden air from the ocean toward the land,” Dr. Koll said. The rotation of the earth gives these winds their direction.

But that’s only part of the story, said Anders Levermann, a climate scientist at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany. “The moment the first rain falls, the land gets cooled,” he said.

That would be expected to stop, or at least slow, the monsoon, by reducing the temperature difference between land and ocean. But there’s now another source of warmth over the land: the condensation of water vapor into droplets, which releases heat. That maintains the temperature difference and keeps the monsoon going.

This self-sustaining feature is important, Dr. Levermann said, because it suggests that, as the world keeps getting warmer, year-to-year variability of the monsoon could increase. “Once you have started the monsoon strong, it will become even stronger,” he said. “Once you have started the monsoon weak, it will become weaker.”

Over the centuries the subcontinent has experienced weak or “failed” monsoons, in which the overall amount of rain is 20 percent to 30 percent lower than average. A failed monsoon in 1899 led to the deaths of 9 million people in central India, by some estimates.

In the middle of the 20th century, foreign aid helped India get through poor monsoons without famine. Since then, improvements in agriculture have made a big difference.

Dr. Kelkar remembers some bad monsoons in the 1960s, when he was in his 20s. “There was failure after failure,” he said. “And the only way to solve the problem was to import wheat from abroad.”

“I used to stand in line at a ration shop, and get my food grains for a week.” It was the kind of monsoon crisis, affecting millions, that no one would like to see repeated.

THE BIG DECISION

In a country obsessed with the monsoon, Rajendra Jenamani plays a crucial role.

Dr. Jenamani is a senior scientist with the national forecasting center at the India Meteorological Department in New Delhi. One of his jobs, in consultation with his colleagues, is to determine when the year’s monsoon has actually begun.

It is a decision that the nation tracks closely. The monsoon’s march across the subcontinent is front-page news for days on end. Television anchors ask again and again, will it be early this year? Late? When will we know?

Mr. Jenamani and his co-workers make this weighty call in a room that might easily be mistaken for a company’s IT department: Shiny white floor, glaring overhead lights, arrays of computer screens and a few floor fans to help fight back the New Delhi heat.

For the start to be declared, there’s a set of criteria that must be met at weather stations in the state of Kerala, on India’s southwestern coast, involving precipitation, cloud cover as well as wind speed and direction.

Of those criteria, Dr. Jenamani said, “Number One is the rainfall.” No matter the state of the wind and clouds, he said, “how can you tell the farmers that the monsoon has come if there isn’t any rain?”

But if the criteria are met, Dr. Jenamani consults with his colleagues and also puts a question to forecasters in Kerala: Do you have any doubts that the monsoon has arrived? “And they say, ‘No, no, no, this is the right time,’” he said.

Only then does Dr. Jenamani head upstairs to brief his boss. The news media gathers in the lobby, and a formal announcement is made.

Thereafter, at 10:30 each morning, as the monsoon progresses, Dr. Jenamani leads a meeting of the forecasters and analysts in his office, joined by several dozen regional meteorologists on large screens along one wall, to discuss that day's forecast.

This year's onset was declared on May 29, a few days ahead of normal. By the first week of July, the monsoon covered the entire country. Withdrawal began in mid-September.

The monsoon's south-to-north migration means that, for extreme northwestern India, the rainy season lasts only two months, about half the duration in cities that are much farther south like Mumbai or Chennai. Whatever the location, however, the monsoon will account for up to 80 percent of the water received during 2022.

"So this is all our life," Dr. Jenamani said. "This is all our water."

'MAKE THE WATER WALK'

The hand-dug trenches that line the hills around Mr. Gagre's farm have helped transform his village.

When it comes to rainfall, the idea is a simple one: "Capture whatever you can," said Crispino Lobo, who co-founded the Watershed Organization Trust, a group that aids monsoon-dependent farmers in Kumbharwadi and hundreds of other villages in trench-digging and other water-conservation efforts to make the most of their increasingly erratic supply.

As warming brings more extreme downpours, it becomes harder to ensure that most of the water stays on the land instead of running off into streams and rivers.

The trenches prevent precious water from rushing away so easily, Mr. Lobo said, "You slow it down, you make it walk." That helps give it a chance to seep into the water table and be available from wells during the dry months.

In a very real way, the hand-dug trenches have achieved far more than preserving water. In an increasingly erratic monsoon, they've helped keep Mr. Gagre's village alive and thriving.

In Kumbharwadi, Mr. Gagre said, before the trenches were dug, often there would be no water after January or February, even when there were good monsoons. Every year for months at a time, people were forced to leave their homes in search of work.

A WARNING SYSTEM RUN BY KIDS

Far to the south, in Kerala, schoolchildren are doing a different kind of work: helping to monitor the threat of flooding from the monsoon's heavy downpours.

Every morning at St. Joseph's Upper Primary School in the hilly village of Malayinchippara, at the 8:30 assembly, some of the 100 students take a reading from a simple cylindrical rain gauge, installed in 2020. They enter how much rain has fallen in a WhatsApp group set up by other volunteers.

It's combined with data from similar gauges in the region to provide a picture of the state of the Meenachil River, which passes about 5 miles from the school and is prone to disastrous flooding in its lower reaches.

"It's a good thing," said Ananyamol Thomas, a 7th grader. "Maybe our rain gauge can help alert the authorities to evacuate people in vulnerable areas."

The citizen-science project is organized by a local group, the Meenachil River Protection Council. Eby Emmanuel, the group's secretary, said the rain-monitoring work began informally about five years ago.

It's now grown to include 220 gauges. Many are at schools but farmers and environmental activists have them as well. At St. Joseph's, the project has been so popular that there are now rain gauges at the homes of four students.

Dr. Koll of the tropical meteorology institute in Pune, who has been involved in the effort, said because there are so many gauges, a lot of data is collected over a relatively small area.

"This is quite important because when we talk of these kinds of cloudburst downpours, it's very localized," he said. With all the data from gauges near the Meenachil, "you can tell that in three or four hours the river might swell."

The project has already had some successes, Mr. Emmanuel said. In 2019, rain gauge data during one monsoon storm suggested that the river would soon be rising, and rapidly. Members of the protection council recognized that a community of about 200 families, densely packed into a low-lying stretch along the river, were at risk.

They managed to persuade a rescue brigade that the community should be evacuated. They were — and in time to escape the floodwaters.

"We saved the lives of 200 families," Mr. Emmanuel said. "That was a big moment for us."

POETRY IN THE RAIN

Dr. Kelkar, who is 79, lives in Pune now, having taught at a local university after leaving Delhi and the India Meteorological Department two decades ago. He retired for good in 2008 and lives a quiet life, writing and occasionally lecturing about various subjects, including the monsoon.

In the living room of his spare 10th-floor apartment he keeps a few shelves of monsoon books, not only the scientific treatises and histories one might expect, but also a lyric poem by a 5th-century writer, Kalidasa, in which a mythical spirit asks a monsoon cloud to send a message to his love.

After years focusing on science, Dr. Kelkar now takes a more spiritual approach to the monsoon.

For him, the arrival of the rains is less about how many weather stations have reported precipitation, and more about the senses and emotions. The abrupt shift in the wind. The sound of thunder, like a beating drum. The smell when the first raindrops hit the parched soil, kicking up dust. The sight of the land turning, with almost chameleon-like speed, from brown to a lush green.

"When the monsoon arrives, everything changes," he said. "You know that this is not a normal day."

Off his small kitchen is a balcony that offers a view to the south and west. It's Dr. Kelkar's own Monsoon Palace.

"I come out here every hour just to let things soak in," he said one late August afternoon, as the clouds approached and passed overhead, sparing Pune their rain this time. "You really feel that things are pretty much good."

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HEADLINE	10/04 Mental health risks high potency cannabis?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/mental-health/should-wa-ban-high-potency-cannabis-researchers-warn-of-mental-health-risks/
GIST	<p>Researcher Beatriz Carlini clicks through a few local cannabis retailers' websites before finding what she's looking for.</p> <p>Her screen displays a yellow goo, similar in appearance to raw honey, or as the product's marketing calls it, "Cake Batter."</p>

The substance is a highly concentrated form of cannabis called a dab, which is produced by extracting the psychoactive compound THC from cannabis plants. It's usually vaporized and inhaled using a device that looks similar to a bong, but often involves a blow torch.

Cake Batter is potent. Its label reads 65% THC.

But the product's THC concentration is "relatively low" in the vast and legal world of highly potent products, or dabs, says Carlini, acting associate professor at the Addictions, Drug and Alcohol Institute at the University of Washington School of Medicine. While a typical cannabis flower averages around 20% THC, some dabs sold in Washington contain as much as 90%.

Such products are setting off alarm bells for physicians and a group of research scientists in the Pacific Northwest, who see the wide availability of dabs and other highly concentrated substances as a quiet but growing threat to public health, especially among young adults and teenagers. Lawmakers are considering new regulations, like a THC cap or higher tax on potent products. However, retailers and suppliers point out that these products are already illegal for those under 21. And they warn that bans or increasing taxes on certain products could spur the growth of an illegal market that would be significantly more difficult to monitor and control.

When cannabis was legalized for recreational use in Washington beginning in 2014, extracted cannabis, which includes concentrates, [made up about 9% of the market](#). Concentrates now make up 35%, according to 2020 data from the [Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board](#).

"This is a case of product development trumping science and trumping policy," Carlini said. "Nobody was aware we were legalizing this."

Industry leaders dispute this, and say that a variety of products — including more potent ones — are part of the natural evolution of a market.

"Those products were envisioned," said Burl Bryson, executive director at the Seattle-based nonprofit The Cannabis Alliance. "In a mature market you're going to see an increased use of concentrates over flower." Research on highly concentrated products — which are also referred to as wax, resin or shatter — is still limited in the U.S., primarily because [the federal government](#) strictly regulates cannabis research.

But scientists point to [emerging](#) evidence from studies in adults that link high-potency THC to an increased risk of experiencing psychosis — and a heightened risk of [developing psychosis years earlier](#) than would otherwise be expected in people at risk for the condition. [Psychosis](#) involves a loss of contact with reality, and symptoms can include delusions and hallucinations.

While it's unclear how high-potency THC affects youths, especially long term, a [large body of research](#) links frequent cannabis use in youths to psychotic symptoms. Anecdotally, pediatricians here report an increasing number of teenagers in emergency rooms with psychotic episodes, disorientation and severe vomiting, called cannabis hyperemesis syndrome.

Whether such products should be further regulated — and how to do so — raises complex questions for policymakers.

So far, only [Vermont](#) and [Connecticut](#) included caps on high THC concentrations in their cannabis-legalization bills — both at 60% THC. California is considering legislation requiring cannabis producers to include a label warning of potential mental health consequences and other risks.

If Washington moves to regulate THC concentrates, the state would become a testing ground for what happens when a state cracks down on the cannabis industry after legalization. In 2021, Carlini and a group of researchers received \$500,000 from lawmakers to study potential regulatory measures; their report was

due to the Washington State Health Care Authority on Sept. 30 and is expected to be released publicly at the end of December.

“We would be the first state to do something after [the state] already created this open season,” said Rep. Lauren Davis, D-Shoreline, who proposed two THC-cap bills that failed to get out of committee in recent legislative sessions; one bill suggested capping THC [concentrates at 10%](#), the other suggested [a 30% cap](#).

Davis, who describes the state’s cannabis industry as a “failed experiment,” said she intends to propose new legislation based on the researchers’ findings.

“Time bomb”

Researchers face an uphill messaging battle: Historically, the U.S. government’s ‘Reefer Madness’ misinformation campaign and the war on drugs sowed serious public doubt about anti-cannabis rhetoric. But scientists warn that emerging data is worrisome.

A majority of teens in the Northwest don’t use cannabis, but among those who do, they increasingly report use of dabs and other alternatives to smoking. According to Washington’s 2021 Healthy Youth Survey, about 33% of Washington 12th graders who use cannabis reported that they dabbled it. And in Oregon, the portion of youth who use cannabis and reported dabbing jumped from [26%](#) to [36%](#) from 2017-2019.

U.S. [Poison Control Center data suggests](#) cannabis-related calls are going up at a time when poison center [calls are going down](#) overall. When people called with cannabis-related concerns, they were more likely to call poison centers after using manufactured cannabis products such as dabs than after using plant-based cannabis.

“When we hear a signal coming through poison centers, I’m taking that very seriously because those signals are quieter than they used to be,” said Julia Dille, a UW epidemiologist, who presented the data at a September symposium that attracted more than 150 scientists and others.

Nearly everyone interviewed acknowledged that more research is needed on high-potency products and their link to mental health consequences in youth. There’s an inherent lag in understanding the relationship, since the factors that contribute to serious mental illnesses are many and can compound over years.

Existing studies don’t include results from people using the types of high-potency products available now: The bulk of the research is in products containing about 10% THC per U.S. government research rules, points out Denise Walker, a clinical psychologist and research professor at UW. And no studies prove a direct causal link between high-potency THC and psychosis, primarily because an experiment in people that tests a direct relationship would be unethical.

“This has been used by the industry as a reason to do nothing,” Carlini said, but “everything we have in hand science-wise, right now, is indicating this is a time bomb.”

Pediatricians say they’re already witnessing what happens when youth with little or no THC tolerance try extremely potent products. Some wind up having a psychotic episode or experiencing temporary cognitive impairment, like trouble with simple motor tasks, finding words or remembering something they were just told. Others who’ve built up a tolerance to high-THC products seek help after severe bouts of vomiting, dehydration and stomach pain, symptoms of CHS.

“Are people really seeing this or are we just blowing smoke here? I’m totally seeing it. I see it at least three or four times a week,” said Dr. Cora Breuner, professor of pediatrics at UW and a physician at Seattle Children’s hospital, noting she’s referring more youth for cannabis use disorder than she did five years ago, but that demand is now outpacing available resources.

At a 2021 state legislative hearing on the issue, Dr. Beth Ebel said some youths are so high when they arrive at the ER that they appear to have a traumatic brain injury.

“Almost a third of the kids 12 and up that I take care of in the trauma center have cannabis involved in their injury,” said Ebel, a pediatrician at Harborview.

What happens now?

The question of how to address concentrates comes down to whether state regulations would embolden a more dangerous black market. Policymakers are weighing several options, including raising age limits or marketing restrictions on high-potency products, charging higher taxes, adding THC caps and launching more robust public health awareness campaigns.

Industry and consumer experts vigorously campaigned against Davis’ THC cap proposals and continue to argue that new restrictions will lead to worse public health outcomes as unregulated products may contain pesticides or dangerous additives.

“(Our) top priority is a safe and quality-controlled marketplace that works to keep products away from kids,” Vicki Christophersen, executive director and lobbyist for Washington CannaBusiness Association, which represents producers and retailers across the state, wrote to The Seattle Times. “A return to prohibition policies is a threat to an open, transparent sector and inadvertently supports the illicit market, which operates in the dark.”

Ramsey Doudar, who works at a cannabis dispensary and leads a consumer advocacy group called Patients and Users for Reasonable Policy, said retailers already enforce strict rules that keep people under 21 from purchasing cannabis.

“The next step is using some of that billion dollars of tax revenue [generated by the cannabis industry] to focus on education and prevention,” he said. Adults should be held accountable when they give or sell cannabis to minors, he added.

Because this is new territory for policymakers, there’s “enormous uncertainty” about the right approach, said Jonathan Caulkins, a professor at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh who’s [analyzed Washington’s cannabis market](#) in collaboration with the nonprofit RAND.

If the state decides to regulate, it should “start small, until we find out what kind of restrictions can be pulled off without creating an illegal market,” he said. “And that’s in part finding out whether or not the Washington state government has the backbone to enforce a prohibition.”

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HEADLINE	10/04 Crews pick up 816tons trash from highways
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/crews-pick-up-816-tons-of-trash-from-wa-highways/
GIST	<p>Are you doing your part to keep public roads clean?</p> <p>Despite 75% of Washington residents saying they never litter, nearly 31,000 pieces of litter can be found per acre on urban interchanges, according to the Washington Department of Ecology.</p> <p>New funding is allowing the Department of Ecology to conduct a litter study through 2022, with results available in March. The study seeks to identify where litter comes from and what kind of litter is found on Washington roads, interchanges and public areas. The last comprehensive litter study was in 2004.</p> <p>Washington spends over \$9 million annually on crews from the Department of Ecology, the Department of Corrections and other agencies that pick up litter. In the first seven months of 2022, crews collected more than 1.6 million pounds of litter from state highways.</p> <p>Fines for littering or illegal dumping range from \$103 to \$5,000, according to the Department of Ecology. Most litter comes from people who either toss it out of their car window or do not properly secure cargo. Out of the 816 tons of litter collected, 11.5% came from homeless encampments.</p>

	<p>According to the Department of Ecology, litter hurts wildlife and unsecured loads cause traffic crashes and fatalities.</p> <p>Here are tips from the Department of Ecology on how to avoid littering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's as simple as don't do it. Hold on to trash until you reach a trash can at a gas station, rest area or your destination. • Use a dedicated container for collecting trash in your vehicle and reduce the chance you accidentally litter when opening a door or window. • If you smoke, use the portable ashtray in your vehicle. • Encourage others not to litter. According to the Department of Ecology's research, about one-fourth of the people who litter said they would stop if a friend or family member asked them to stop.
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HEADLINE	10/04 Coffee vs. tea health benefits smackdown
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/wellness/interactive/2022/coffee-vs-tea-nutrition-health/?itid=hp-top-table-main-t-6
GIST	<p>Do you start your mornings with a potent dose of caffeine from a freshly brewed cup of Joe? Or do you prefer a slightly less caffeinated nudge from a warm and gentle cup of tea?</p> <p>Whatever your preference, scientists have found that regularly drinking coffee or tea can provide a variety of health benefits. But how do coffee and tea compare in a head-to-head matchup? We took a look at the research, and here's what we found.</p> <p>ROUND 1 A source of fiber Did you know that your morning coffee includes a dose of fiber? One study found that on average, coffee has between 1.1 and 1.8 grams of fiber per cup, depending on whether it's filtered, espresso or instant.</p> <p>That might not sound like much. But it's more fiber than you'll find in orange juice, which has about a half gram of fiber per cup. You'll still need to eat plenty of fruits and vegetables to get the recommended 25 grams of daily fiber, but two or three cups of coffee a day can help you get there. A cup of tea on the other hand typically will not help you meet your daily fiber requirements — unless of course you decide to munch on the tea leaves.</p> <p>Score one for coffee.</p> <p>ROUND 2 Mental focus Need to get some work done? Studying for a big exam? The caffeine in both coffee and tea will help you concentrate. Studies show that caffeine can improve your attention span, vigilance, alertness and reaction time. But too much caffeine can lead to jitteriness and over-arousal, which can end up hurting your performance.</p> <p>The amount of caffeine in coffee and tea can vary widely depending on a lot of factors. But according to the Mayo Clinic, an 8-ounce cup of brewed coffee contains around 100 milligrams of caffeine. (Espresso and instant coffee have less.) By comparison, an 8-ounce cup of black tea has around 50 milligrams of caffeine.</p> <p>So, which is better, coffee or tea? One study asked people to drink four cups of coffee or tea throughout the day. Both beverages had similar effects on alertness and cognitive performance. But the tea had one big advantage over coffee: It had enough caffeine to aid performance, but not so much that it disrupted sleep.</p>

Score one for tea!

ROUND 3

A boon to the gut microbiome

Coffee and tea are good sources of polyphenols — plant compounds that are thought to confer many health benefits. [Studies suggest](#) that polyphenols can lower your risk of developing chronic diseases, and they are “rocket fuel” for beneficial bacteria that make up your gut microbiome, the communities of trillions of microbes that live inside our guts, said Tim Spector, a professor at King’s College London. Coffee [has significantly more](#) polyphenols than green tea, and green tea has more polyphenols than black tea.

Spector and his colleagues can tell whether someone is a coffee drinker just by analyzing their poop. “There are specific microbes that seem to grow pretty well in people who drink a lot of coffee,” he said. They haven’t found a similar effect in tea drinkers.

This round goes to coffee.

ROUND 4

Lower risk for heart disease

According to large population studies, [coffee](#) and [tea](#) both appear to be good for your heart, lowering risk for heart disease and stroke.

But these studies aren’t conclusive — it may be that coffee and tea drinkers have a lot of other heart-healthy habits, like exercising more or eating healthier diets. But it appears the antioxidants and polyphenols in coffee and tea have a protective effect on heart health. Clinical trials show that regularly consuming tea, especially green tea, may slightly improve blood pressure and [cholesterol](#). Drinking decaffeinated coffee — about two to four cups a day — [has also been linked](#) to reductions in heart disease. This suggests that any cardiovascular benefits from drinking coffee and tea probably stem from compounds other than caffeine. There are more studies linking coffee to heart health than there are for tea. But you can’t go wrong either way.

It looks like this round is a draw.

ROUND 5

Lower cancer risk

Many studies over the years have found that coffee drinkers have lower rates of cancer, including a meta-analysis [of 59 studies](#) across 40 cohorts that showed regular coffee drinkers had a 13 percent lower risk of developing cancer compared to seldom or never drinkers. Regular coffee drinking may offer some protection against [colorectal](#), [prostate](#), [liver](#), [endometrial](#), [oral](#) and [breast cancers](#).

The data aren’t conclusive, but the American Cancer Society says coffee contains hundreds of [biologically active compounds](#), including some that have been shown to reduce inflammation, prevent damage to cells, and regulate genes involved in DNA repair. “Whether it’s cancer, obesity or heart disease, inflammation is the enemy, and one way you can dampen inflammation is by drinking coffee,” said Sanjiv Chopra, a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and the author of “[Coffee! The Magical Elixir](#).”

So far, studies haven’t found a link between tea consumption and cancer prevention. One [meta-analysis](#) of 113 studies found “little evidence to support the hypothesis that tea drinking is associated with cancer risk.” In this round, at least from the studies so far, coffee is the clear favorite.

ROUND 6

Type 2 Diabetes

A cup of coffee can produce a short-term spike in blood sugar levels due to the caffeine it contains. Yet large studies show that people who routinely drink coffee are less likely to develop Type 2 diabetes. Marilyn C. Cornelis, an associate professor of preventive medicine at Northwestern University and an expert on coffee, tea and caffeine metabolism, says this could be due to coffee’s large concentration of

chlorogenic acid, a polyphenol that's been [shown in some studies](#) to improve insulin sensitivity and blood sugar control.

A [meta-analysis](#) of research that included more than 1 million people found that those who drank up to four cups of coffee daily had a 25 percent lower risk of developing diabetes compared to people who drank little or no coffee. People who drank up to four cups of decaf a day had a 20 percent lower risk. "Coffee is highly beneficial for reducing the risk of diabetes," said Cornelis.

While tea does not contain chlorogenic acid, it does have other plant compounds that are thought to be beneficial for blood sugar control. But studies looking at the relationship between tea consumption and diabetes risk have produced conflicting findings. [Some suggest](#) that having four or more cups of green, black or oolong tea daily can reduce diabetes risk. A [meta-analysis of randomized trials](#) found that green tea could reduce blood sugar levels. [But other](#) studies have found no clear link between tea and diabetes risk. Ultimately experts say the evidence that coffee may be at least somewhat protective against diabetes is stronger than it is for tea. Another win for coffee!

ROUND 7

Stress levels

If you want a smooth and gentle beverage that might even melt some stress away, then look no further than tea — or as the famous author P.L. Travers called it, "balm for the soul." [Studies have found](#) that when people are stressed, drinking green or black tea can help them feel more relaxed and [lower their levels of cortisol](#), the stress hormone. [Studies suggest](#) that this is in part due to L-theanine, a compound found in tea — particularly green and black teas — that seems to promote relaxation. "L-theanine has kind of a calming effect," Cornelis at Northwestern said. "It's sometimes even included in melatonin supplements to help with sleep."

Compared to tea, coffee contains much higher levels of caffeine, and caffeine is [known to stimulate cortisol](#) levels and elevate your mood. But as anyone who has ever had one too many energy drinks or cups of coffee can attest, caffeine can also cause [jitteriness, anxiety and insomnia](#) when consumed in excess.

Long story short, if it's relaxation you're after, then a cup of tea is your safest bet. Another round goes to tea.

ROUND 8

Longevity

Coffee and tea lovers rejoice! Coffee and tea drinkers tend to live longer than people who don't drink either beverage.

For tea drinkers, both green and black tea are associated with greater longevity. [In one recent study](#), scientists followed a half million people over a 14-year period and found that people who drank at least two cups of tea daily had a 9 to 13 percent lower risk of dying during the study period compared to non-tea drinkers. The study was carried out in the United Kingdom, where most of the tea-drinkers consumed black tea. But large studies of green-tea drinkers have [reached similar findings](#).

Black tea and especially green tea are rich in polyphenols and other beneficial compounds, "and these compounds could potentially reduce stress and inflammation in the body," said Maki Inoue-Choi, a staff scientist at the National Institutes of Health and lead author of the recent tea study. More research is needed to understand the potential mechanisms involved.

As for coffee, [a July study](#) followed almost 172,000 people and found that those who drank 2.5 to 4.5 cups of coffee per day had a 30 percent lower likelihood of dying during the roughly seven years of the study compared to people who didn't drink coffee. Even those who drank their coffee with a teaspoon of sugar seemed to gain a benefit.

These studies come with an important limitation: They are observational, meaning they can't prove causation. But tea and coffee provide so many health benefits that it's reasonable to conclude that they could lower your odds of an early death, say experts. Chopra at Harvard Medical School pointed out that at least five large studies in leading medical journals have now shown that coffee drinkers have lower mortality rates. "These studies keep coming and coming," he said.

This round is a draw.

AND THE WINNER IS ...

In this battle over health benefits, coffee comes out on top. Coffee drinkers can raise a mug to fiber, microbiome health and lowering risk for cancer and diabetes. But tea drinkers do not despair. Tea is undoubtedly good for your blood pressure, cholesterol, stress levels and mental health and productivity. And both drinks are winners when it comes to heart health and longevity. And for tea, especially, there are likely more health benefits that are yet to be discovered.

One reason coffee is linked to more health benefits than tea is that it's been the subject of far more studies, said Chopra at Harvard Medical School. "I tell my tea-drinker friends that we may learn in the years to come that tea has additional benefits," he added.

If you are neither a coffee nor a tea drinker, don't feel pressured to change. The [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) state that people who don't drink coffee or tea aren't encouraged to start. Plain or flavored water and milk are also good healthy options.

There is one final category in the tea and coffee smackdown that should be considered: [popularity](#). It's been estimated that the world drinks [three cups of tea](#) for every cup of coffee. And tea is the [second most](#) popular beverage in the world. The first is water.

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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	10/04 Parade attack driver: sovereign citizen
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/xgy4nw/darrell-brooks-trial-waukesha-christmas-parade-attack
GIST	<p>The man accused of intentionally driving into a crowd and killing six people during a Wisconsin Christmas parade has declared himself a "sovereign citizen" and is representing himself, almost immediately derailing his trial.</p> <p>The sovereign citizen idea is an unwieldy and pseudo-legal notion that essentially argues that a person is outside of their country's laws.</p> <p>Darrell Brooks, 39, faces six first-degree murder charges and 77 additional charges in relation to the incident at the Christmas parade in Waukesha last November. Six people were killed and 62 other people were injured when the SUV Brooks was driving plowed through the crowd, prosecutors say. Police said it looked as if the driver was weaving the vehicle to inflict as much damage as possible.</p> <p>Among those killed was an 8-year-old boy who was marching in the parade with his baseball team and multiple members of a dance troop made up of grandmothers.</p> <p>Police arrested Brooks after he allegedly left his SUV and tried to escape into a house.</p> <p>Last week, Brooks made headlines by clashing frequently with Judge Jennifer Dorow. He challenged basic legal notions and annoyed the judge to the point where she adjourned the hearing. He laughed when his accused crimes were read against him and repeatedly said he did "not understand the nature of the charges" against him. He also fired his court-appointed attorneys and demanded to be able to represent himself.</p>

"You have demonstrated through this hearing that you don't have a basic understanding of some of the things that are going on," said Dorow in response.

Despite her obvious misgivings, the judge granted Brooks the right to defend himself but is already threatening to revoke it. On Monday, as [reported by local news outlet Fox9](#), Brooks filed a handwritten document demanding the court "verify his identity" and that he's a "United States citizen." He requested "certified copies of her oath," asked to be given more time to go through his documents, and went on several rants about the Constitution.

He made so many interruptions that he was removed from the court and placed in a room where he could watch the proceedings without interrupting. The jury selection process will continue this week.

[Dr. Christine Sarteschi](#), an extremism scholar who has long researched sovereign citizens, said Brooks appears to be an extreme case.

"They don't believe in the court system, they don't believe in the government. They don't think they have jurisdiction, and so they challenge them, like he's doing," Sarteschi told VICE News. "(Brooks) seems worse in some ways than a lot of sovereign citizens."

Sarteschi said it appears the judge is trying to avoid a mistrial.

"They're trying to eliminate that possibility because I've seen plenty of sovereign cases where somebody is allowed to represent themselves and then when they lose, which is typically the case, they go back and they try to appeal it on the basis that they should not have been allowed to represent themselves," she said.

In June Brooks filed an insanity defense, but he withdrew that in early September. His mother had said previously that Brooks suffers from mental health issues, and she recently asked the judge not to allow him to defend himself.

The attack has been exploited by right-wing and far-right influencers, mainly due to Brooks' history of making social media posts that are defamatory against Jewish and white people. His posts, and the fact Brooks is Black, led many in the far-right ecosystem to [declare the attack an anti-white hate crime](#).

Police have not given a dedicated motivation to Brooks' alleged attack. They do believe he was driving away from a domestic disturbance shortly before the parade. Brooks has a history of domestic violence, including a domestic abuse charge for allegedly hitting his girlfriend with the same vehicle he's alleged to have done the attack with just 21 days before the mass murder.

While the notion of a sovereign citizen may seem preposterous the idea has been around for decades but exploded during the pandemic. Now, influencers within the movement go around the country and hold seminars for hundreds of people. Sarteschi couldn't tell if Brooks was a longtime adherent of the pseudo-legal movement.

"I didn't get the impression that he had a lot of knowledge, but he does seem to be very disruptive at every chance he gets," she said.

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HEADLINE	10/04 Spokane police arrest 5: gas theft in car lot
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/crime/spokane-county-deputies-arrest-five-people-gas-theft-attempt-dealership/293-180bf43d-36ba-477a-a0fa-200d39335a29
GIST	SPOKANE, Wash. — Spokane County deputies arrested five people in connection with a gas theft attempt in the early morning hours of Oct. 4, 2022.

According to the [Spokane County Sheriff's Office](#) (SCSO), 10 car gas tanks were vandalized, causing thousands of dollars in damage.

SCSO says the incident took place at approximately 1:10 a.m. when offsite security reported seeing two men dressed in all-black clothing, walking around cars and trying door handles at the [Lithia Car Dealership off North Newport Highway](#).

After several SCSO deputies arrived, they observed flashlights in the area and moved toward them, noting a strong odor of gasoline in the process.

Deputies came into contact with two men, one lying under a vehicle and another standing toward the rear of the vehicle. Deputies noticed a red drill and three gas cans with fuel flowing from the car's gas tank into one of the cans. Both suspects were detained at the scene.

Soon after, additional deputies spotted a red Honda trying to flee the scene. The car stalled before deputies gave commands to a juvenile female driver to exit the vehicle. The driver refused and chose to try and restart the vehicle. Noticing three suspects inside, deputies broke the window and reached in, attempting to unlock it from the inside.

The driver was able to get the car running and began revving the engine. One of the suspects, identified as 26-year-old Vincent M.R. Stevens, reached forward to put the car in gear while yelling at the driver to step on the gas.

Deputies reportedly disengaged and the car drove forward approximately 30-40 feet before dying again. A patrol car received minor damage when it was placed in front of the Honda to prevent the suspects' escape.

All three suspects were safely detained, according to SCSO. Based on their age, all five suspects were transported and booked into the Spokane County Jail and Spokane County Detention Center.

SCSO developed probable cause to charge all five suspects with various felony and misdemeanor crimes. Ten vehicles were found to have their gas tanks drilled or damaged to remove fuel. SCSO says the estimated damage caused is approximately \$10,000.

The suspects and the charges they are facing are as follows, according to SCSO:

- **20-year-old Jonathan L. Schroeder:** Charged with first-degree felony malicious mischief, third degree theft from a motor vehicle, making false statements
- **26-year-old Vincent M.R. Stevens:** Charged with first-degree felony malicious mischief, third-degree assault
- **19-year-old Serena R. Right:** Charged with first-degree felony malicious mischief
- **Juvenile female:** Charged with first-degree felony malicious mischief, attempting to elude a police vehicle, second-degree theft from a motor vehicle
- **Juvenile male:** Charged with first-degree felony malicious mischief, second-degree theft from a motor vehicle.

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HEADLINE	10/04 Seattle homicides on the rise
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/seattle-washington-homicides-crime-increasing#
GIST	<p>SEATTLE, Wash — The number of homicides in the city of Seattle so far this year has already surpassed last year's total.</p> <p>Data from the city shows there have been 47 homicides so far this year, which is greater than all but one of the past five years. Only 2020 had more, with 53 homicides reported.</p> <p>“Well, that’s a little scary,” said Mary Jones, who makes an annual visit to Seattle from her home in Texas. So far, this trip, she said they’ve done a lot of walking throughout downtown Seattle. “I feel very safe, we even walked out in the dark last night, quite a ways and we felt fine,” said Jones.</p>

	<p>“And I always try to make sure that we’re together and we don’t get separated,” said her daughter, Mya Jones.</p> <p>“I mean, I feel like I can walk out by myself at night,” said Jones’ son, Mykael. Mary shook her head when her son said that and said she would not allow that, even though he’s 18.</p> <p>George McMahon, with grown children of his own, said he doesn’t even feel safe at 9 a.m. in the morning. “You got people come up to me crying asking me for money putting on a show, and I just don’t feel safe, it’s not the Seattle I’ve known in the past,” said McMahon.</p> <p>KOMO News took these safety concerns and others to Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell Tuesday, who said the city is working on initiatives to improve safety.</p> <p>“When I talk about more police officers people have something in mind that I’m trying to create a New York City presence. We want a sufficient amount of police officers,” he said. The mayor said the idea is to have more eyes on the ground and help build trust, not only to make visitors but also residents feel safer.</p> <p>“So, whether it’s how they feel or what they personally feel that is it that perception or that actual fact that we’re bringing real strategies to work,” said Mayor Harrell.</p> <p>Some of these new initiatives the mayor’s talking about are in his next budget proposal, which must be approved by city council.</p> <p>“Sometimes there’s the perception that they’re not safe. Sometimes they’re not safe. So, whether it’s how they feel or what they personally feel, that is that perception, or that actual fact, that we’re bringing real strategies to work,” said Harrell.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 Tacoma: 4 organized illegal street racing
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/south-sound-news/alleged-tacoma-street-racing-organizers-face-26-charges/3CHVISTXJRAJRI2IENIDFKFY/
GIST	<p>Four alleged street racing organizers have been charged with a total of 26 counts of aiding and abetting reckless driving in Tacoma.</p> <p>According to the Tacoma Police Department, the four men were arrested over the summer in a multi-agency investigation that included the Kent Police Department, Washington State Patrol, Lakewood Police Department, Pierce County Sheriff’s Office, Ruston Police Department and the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division.</p> <p>The men range in age from 18 to 20 years old.</p> <p>Detectives with the Tacoma Police Department investigated 13 cases of illegal street racing and intersection takeover events from mid-January through March 2022.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 Snohomish Co. leaders confront crime rise
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/snohomish-county-mayors-business-leaders-coalition-crime-rates/281-c5ba2685-4323-4b3a-98ef-c3e0db887c36
GIST	<p>EVERETT, Wash. — Diedrich Coffee on Highway 99 in Everett is one of the newest businesses on the block – and its welcome to the neighborhood has been a rough one.</p> <p>“At about 4:15 right here on Holly Drive there were people shooting. So I, of course, hit the ground and crawled behind the fridge and called police,” said manager Jordan Willard.</p>

Willard said pepper spray and a Taser are always at an arm's reach. She said she's worried for her fellow baristas and wants the city to do more.

It's a concern KING 5's Sebastian Robinson took to [Everett's Mayor](#), Cassie Franklin.

"I empathize with her I hear her and I hear many people in the community expressing the same concerns," Franklin said.

The mayor of Everett isn't shying away from the reality her city is facing. She said citizens regularly tell her they feel unsafe.

Tuesday Franklin stood alongside several Snohomish County mayors and police chiefs to launch a new interagency coalition intended to bring the crime rate down. The so-called Mayors and Business Leaders for Safer Communities, a 503c4 – is intended to bring together resources from across the region.

"All of us are dealing with this issue and I think by banding together and amplifying our voices we can make a more powerful impact of how do we fix this," Franklin said.

It's an issue that was recently highlighted in a PR offensive, led by law enforcement, [calling for a change to newly passed state laws](#) that limit when police can pursue a suspect in a vehicle. The law's original sponsor called the video a "fear-mongering campaign ad."

Back at the coffee shop and Willard says for now she has no plans to let her guard down.

"There's only so much you can do just make sure that you're keeping things locked up and that you're staying vigilant," she said.

It's a shop that's already reduced hours due to crime – one they hope will outlast this rise in crime.

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HEADLINE	10/04 Seattle gives \$2M for storefront repair fund
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/seattle-announces-2m-storefront-repair-fund-for-small-businesses/
GIST	<p>The city of Seattle will give small businesses nearly \$2 million in grants to repair damaged storefronts, helping business owners absorb the cost of broken windows and doors.</p> <p>To help local businesses with the burden of replacing damaged facades, city officials announced Tuesday that nearly \$2 million in federal funds will be allocated in \$2,000 increments to help businesses that have had their storefronts damaged since the beginning of 2021.</p> <p>Noting the strain of the pandemic and crime rates on local businesses, Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell, Director of the Office of Economic Development Markham McIntyre, and Councilmembers Sara Nelson and Alex Pedersen announced the grant program which will open later this month.</p> <p>Nelson, whose experience as the owner of Fremont Brewing has informed many of her policy priorities in her first year on council, said she supported the grants as a way of improving businesses and neighborhoods as a whole.</p> <p>"It goes beyond simply helping the individual business, because when you when you see a bunch of storefronts that are boarded up in a neighborhood, it brings down the character, the morale," Nelson said. "And so what we're really talking about today is revitalization. It's about bringing our city back."</p>

Moe Khan, who operates Cedars Restaurant, where the news conference was held, said that the business, owned by his father, had to replace a glass door earlier this year after it was broken, noting that the damage cost time and money, which are limited for small business owners.

“It’s hard to run a small business. It’s like another day, another challenge,” Kahn said after the announcement. He said he had to get a restaurant employee to install plywood over the door as a temporary fix because contractors are backed up. He said the final cost was well over \$2,000.

“The city helping businesses fix these things helps businesses stay open,” he added.

Nelson acknowledged the news of [four University of Washington students who were injured in a shooting over the weekend](#) outside of a bar about a block away, noting that “property crime does not compare to the horrors” that took place.

“But all things along the whole spectrum of the public safety crisis that the city is experiencing right now — all of that demands action; demands that we do something and some things are easier to address than others,” Nelson said.

Harrell also noted that fixing broken windows will not solve public safety, but that both crime intervention and business revitalization are “part and parcel” to his One Seattle mission.

The city tested the program on a smaller scale early this year after businesses called for help, according to Nelson. To test the program, the city matched a \$20,000 fund from The U District Partnership, a business improvement group in the University District, and provided more than 30 businesses with smaller grants to make similar repairs after a rash of damage to facades, according to Don Blakeney, executive director of the UDP.

[Applications will open Oct. 18](#), and will be accepted on a rolling basis until funds are gone. Small businesses will be defined as businesses with less than \$7 million in revenue and fewer than 50 employees. To support underserved small businesses, the Office of Economic Development says it will prioritize supporting businesses from the following communities:

- Small businesses owned by Black, Indigenous and people of color
- Woman-owned small businesses
- Small businesses located in a highly distressed census tract with a minimum of 30% poverty or not exceeding 60% median income, which meet the definition of “low-income communities” set by the federal Small Business Administration.

A [map developed by OED and other city departments](#) to determine which census tracts have been most impacted by the pandemic — based on race and social equity, displacement risk, number of COVID cases per capita, and the number/change in number of low wage jobs — will also be used to assess need.

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HEADLINE	10/04 Ex-college staffer staged campus explosion
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/former-northeastern-university-staffer-is-accused-of-staging-campus-explosion-11664903678?mod=hp_listb_pos2
GIST	<p>Federal authorities arrested and charged a former Northeastern University staff member Tuesday in Texas, accusing him of lying to law enforcement and staging an explosion last month that led to a campus evacuation and major police response.</p> <p>Jason Duhaime, 45 years old, is scheduled to appear later Tuesday before a federal magistrate judge in San Antonio. It wasn’t immediately known who was representing Mr. Duhaime.</p> <p>At the time of the incident, he was director of the Immersive Media Lab at Northeastern, but a university spokeswoman said Tuesday that he was no longer employed there.</p>

Mr. Duhaime said Sept. 13 that he was injured when sharp objects blew out of a hard-sided plastic case as he opened it, but the next day officials said they [were investigating whether he staged the incident](#) and questioned whether there was any explosion at all.

The package had been accompanied by a rambling printed note that railed against virtual reality, the metaverse and [Meta Platforms](#) Inc. CEO [Mark Zuckerberg](#). According to a photograph included in a court filing, the typed letter warned that Northeastern's virtual-reality lab had two months to take down its operations "or else!!!!!" It ended with the warning, "WE ARE WATCHING YOU."

Forensic experts found a draft of that same letter on a computer in Mr. Duhaime's Northeastern office, created just hours before the alleged explosion, according to an Federal Bureau of Investigation agent's affidavit included in a court filing unsealed Tuesday.

The agent said Mr. Duhaime's statements to a 911 operator member, Boston police and the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force about an explosion didn't match the physical evidence, including that the case was empty and undamaged. Mr. Duhaime's shirt also didn't appear damaged though he had some small marks or bruises on his arms, the agent said.

The agent also said a student who had been present saw Mr. Duhaime go into a closet to open the case, yell and exit quickly, and that the student didn't hear any other noises.

"Making false threats is not some harmless prank. It's selfish, shortsighted and a federal crime," said Joseph Bonavolonta, special agent in charge of the FBI's Boston division, adding that significant law enforcement resources were directed to the investigation.

He said an investigation into the motive was ongoing.

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HEADLINE	10/04 Police monitor private security cameras?
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/04/san-francisco-police-video-surveillance
GIST	<p>Last week San Francisco city leaders approved a 15-month pilot allowing police to monitor live footage from surveillance cameras owned by consenting businesses and civilians without a warrant.</p> <p>The 7-4 decision by the San Francisco board of supervisors was a major loss for a broad coalition of civil liberties groups that had argued the move would give police unprecedented surveillance powers. It also seemingly marked a departure from the progressive stance on surveillance the city's leadership had previously maintained.</p> <p>In May 2019, the board had made history by making the city the first to ban the use of facial recognition by any local government agency. At the time, supervisor Aaron Peskin said, the city had an "an outsize responsibility to regulate the excesses of technology".</p> <p>But more than three years, a pandemic and many protests against police injustice later, some members of the board now say they need to balance concerns for privacy with the need to allow law enforcement officials to "utilize certain technologies to make San Francisco safer".</p> <p>Privacy advocacy groups say the shift is part of a larger phenomenon in cities across the US, where fears of both perceived and real increases in crime have prompted police and elected officials to expand the use of surveillance technology, even if there isn't always clear evidence those technologies are effective at deterring or solving crimes.</p> <p>In Detroit, the city council is in the midst of a months-long back and forth on whether to expand its contract with gunshot detection company ShotSpotter. And the city of New Orleans this summer rolled back parts of its own pioneering facial recognition ban, allowing police to request the use of the controversial technology.</p>

“People are being told there’s a rise in crime and maybe they’re experiencing some themselves and they want to see something being done about it,” Dave Maass, the director of investigations at the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a civil liberties organization, said. “And for elected officials, throwing money at surveillance technology is an easy political thing to do.”

It’s a continuation of tech solutionism, Maass argued: “Vendors come in promising the world with these technologies without talking about the risks or threats and policymakers just swallow it without questioning it.”

Like many cities in the US, San Francisco in the past years has seen [complicated shifts](#) in its crime dynamics, witnessing a rise in reported homicides and certain property crimes but a decline in overall reports of violent crime.

Still, many residents and business owners in the city say they perceive crime to be on the rise. And the city has made national headlines with high-profile smash-and-grabs; high rates of [car break-ins](#) and a persistent homelessness emergency, putting pressure on the city’s moderate mayor, London Breed.

Proponents have argued that accessing real time video footage will help alleviate deficiencies caused by staffing shortages at the San Francisco police department – a sentiment echoed by some of the city’s business improvement districts, non-profit groups created in partnership with the city that focuses on bettering specific commercial areas in SF. “With so many fewer officers, the easier we can make their job the better,” Tracy Everwine, who leads the Mid-Market business district, told the [SF Standard](#).

The office of Breed, who sponsored the private camera legislation, praised the board’s decision and said it “balances the need to give our police officers another tool to address significant public safety challenges and to hold those who break the law accountable”.

The mayor’s office said the program was a “sensible” policy with “strong guardrails against misuse of this technology”.

That includes the “right of the owner or operator to refuse any request for access, a mandate that the police maintain a log of all written requests for access that are auditable upon demand, training for any officer who would have access to video, and explicit prohibitions against using temporary live video access to target anyone for exercising their first amendment rights”, the mayor’s office said.

The change in tone was not unanimous among all of the city’s legislators. Supervisor Dean Preston, who voted against the ordinance, told Axios he was “saddened” by how far the board had come from the shared “commitment to changing our city and our society from a society that over-polices, over-surveils, over-criminalizes and over-incarcerates people, particularly Black and brown people”.

“There’s no evidence that the kind of broader surveillance, especially the live surveillance ... reduces crime or makes us safer in any way,” he continued.

Civil liberties advocates argued the expansion of surveillance camera access for police was another sign that business interests trumped those of the city’s residents. It’s a “circumvention of the public will”, said Steven Renderos, the executive director of the racial and economic advocacy group Media Justice. He described the facial recognition ban as a policy that came out of the will of the people and the new ordinance as one that was lobbied for by the city’s business districts and entrepreneurs.

“I fear for a city that has been shaped by the perspectives of the few and the perspectives of the few are the ones influencing policy decisions,” Renderos said.

The coalition has also argued there’s little evidence that accessing live feeds from surveillance cameras could help prevent or solve crimes, citing a 2008 UC Berkeley [study](#) that shows the presence of cameras did not significantly deter crimes from being committed. A 2016 [study](#) out of Newark, New Jersey, found

similar results, indicating that with the exception of auto theft, a closed circuit camera network did not show a significant reduction in crime.

“A lot of the folks who came out to support the proposal and support the policy were business owners who work in the retail space who just have concerns about retail theft and crime,” said Jennifer Jones, a technology and civil liberties attorney at the ACLU. “Unfortunately, they don’t necessarily interrogate this presumption that live camera surveillance could actually do anything to prevent that or make that better.”

They also pointed to the potential for police to exploit the mechanism to infringe on first amendment protected activity like protests. Last year, the ACLU sued the SFPD for accessing live feeds from surveillance cameras in the city’s Union Square district during a protest against police brutality in response to the murder of George Floyd. The ACLU ultimately lost the lawsuit ([and is now appealing the decision](#)) but alleged in it that the police violated the city’s ordinance that requires prior approval for using any surveillance technology.

“The problem is SFPD has shown itself to be unaccountable when it comes to surveillance,” Maass said. “Even when there are rules in place they don’t want to follow the rules.”

Ultimately, the board decided that the 15-month trial period included enough guardrails to move forward and evaluate the program’s efficacy. “As I said the other day, is this perfect?” Peskin said to Axios. “Probably not. Is it worth a try? I think so.”

Supervisors Preston and Peskin did not respond to a request for comment.

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HEADLINE	10/04 Stockton police link more shootings
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/03/us/stockton-serial-killer.html
GIST	<p>Six homicides since April have left some residents unsettled in Stockton, Calif., after investigators said the killings might be related.</p> <p>The police said last week that five victims, all men between the ages of 21 and 54, were fatally shot while alone in dimly lit areas at night or in the early morning between July 8 and Sept. 27, the police said on Friday. Four of the men were Hispanic. One was white.</p> <p>On Monday, the police said they had linked two additional shootings. A 40-year-old Hispanic man was killed in Oakland, Calif., about 70 miles west of Stockton, on April 10. And a 46-year-old Black woman was shot in Stockton on April 16 but survived her injuries.</p> <p>None of the five men shot in Stockton were robbed; their keys and wallets were not taken, Stanley McFadden, the chief of the Stockton Police Department, told reporters last week. The attacks happened in different neighborhoods.</p> <p>It was not immediately known if the victims in the two additional shootings were robbed.</p> <p>The police said on Friday that investigators had reviewed hours of surveillance video and were seeking a “person of interest” whom they asked the public to help identify. The police published a photo of that person walking, though the photo offered few identifiable clues.</p> <p>Investigators do not know if that person was responsible for all the killings or if others were involved, Officer Joe Silva, a Stockton police spokesman, said on Monday.</p> <p>“There could be one person; there could be multiple people,” he said. “We just don’t know.”</p> <p>While the investigation continues, the police have asked residents to remain vigilant, to avoid isolated and dimly lit areas and not to travel alone, if possible.</p>

The police also asked residents to call a tip line with possible leads and to share video that could help in the investigation. The city of Stockton has offered a \$75,000 reward for information that leads to an arrest, in addition to a \$10,000 reward offered by Stockton Crime Stoppers and [an additional \\$10,000](#) from a local business owner, the police said.

“We’re pleading with our community,” Officer Silva said, asking for information and mentioning the reward. “We do have grieving family members who want some type of closure and we’re asking people to do the right thing and contact us.”

The killings have spread anxiety among some residents and prompted some to wonder whether other unsolved homicides in the city might be connected, said Nuri Muhammad, a program strategy manager at Advance Peace Stockton, a community-based organization dedicated to eliminating gun violence.

“Something is going on in the city of Stockton, and it’s not gang violence,” Mr. Muhammad said.

“People are clearly shaken by it,” he added, and some are concerned that because most of the victims were Hispanic, “there’s an undertone of some kind of racism.”

Residents are feeling unprotected and sense that “things are very, very unsafe — more than usual,” he said.

Officer Silva said that investigators do not believe that the victims were targeted because they were Hispanic. “At this point, we don’t believe that to be a factor,” he said.

Located in the agricultural flatlands of central California, about 80 miles east of San Francisco, Stockton — home to about 322,000 people — has long struggled with poverty and violence.

In 2012, it became the largest city in the country to [declare bankruptcy](#) after the collapse of the housing market, the erosion of its tax base and years of [mismanagement and overspending](#). It officially [exited bankruptcy](#) in 2015 after addressing more than \$2 billion in long-term debt and obligations, city officials said.

Stockton has recorded 43 homicides this year, compared with 39 last year, Officer Silva said. About 12 of this year’s homicides are believed to be gang-related, he said.

“I know there’s been talk in the media and on social media that there’s a serial killer in the city of Stockton,” Chief McFadden [said at a news conference last week](#). “I’m here to tell you that we do not have that information that we have a serial killer in Stockton.”

Harry Black, Stockton’s city manager, said on Monday that the killings did not align with what city officials knew about the crimes that typically occur in the city.

“We track it daily, obviously, we know the ins and outs, and we became aware of this because something just felt irregular about these particular crimes,” Mr. Black said. “It didn’t fall in line with the historical pattern of crime we have from one year to the next, so this is a different situation, an outlier.”

He said that the killings had created anxiety and unease but said the city was trying to respond by communicating frequently with residents and by working to “catch this particular person or persons as soon as possible.”

Toni McNeil, a community organizer at Faith in the Valley, a community group in California’s Central Valley, said that the police were taking the killings seriously and increasing patrols.

“What I have heard from community members is they feel like law enforcement is really stepping up, that they feel a strong presence,” she said. “Even people who don’t necessarily engage with law enforcement feel like they’re doing a good job.”

HEADLINE	10/04 Courier in record fentanyl haul slips DEA
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/crime-courts/dea-lost-track-drug-mule-114-pound-fentanyl-bust-rcna49419
GIST	<p>Federal drug agents and prosecutors in Colorado held a news conference in July to tout their work taking fentanyl off the streets amid a string of highly publicized overdose deaths.</p> <p>“I wanted to give you guys something different today — not just a doom and gloom story,” Brian Besser, the special agent in charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration’s Denver Field Division, said. “I wanted you to see that behind the scenes there is aggressive and tenacious police work being done and prosecution being done to save lives and to bring people to justice.”</p> <p>Among the cases Besser highlighted was the seizure of 114 pounds of pure fentanyl in June — enough, he said, to kill more than 25 million people. He described it as the largest fentanyl bust on a U.S. highway in history.</p> <p>“We are not asleep at the wheel,” Besser said.</p> <p>It was a curious turn of phrase given what had happened just after the record fentanyl seizure — a stunning blunder that went unmentioned during the July 6 news conference.</p> <p>The DEA lost track of the man who was transporting the massive amount of fentanyl.</p> <p>The suspect, David Maldonado, 27, had agreed to cooperate with federal agents and help them arrest the drug traffickers in South Bend, Indiana, where he said the fentanyl was headed, according to the Colorado State Patrol. But on the way to do the deal, Maldonado managed to lose the DEA agents and remove the tracker they had placed on his car.</p> <p>He’s now considered a fugitive.</p> <p>The case represents an embarrassing episode for the DEA at a time when drug cartels are flooding the U.S. with fentanyl, a synthetic opioid 50 times stronger than heroin, and the overdose rate is soaring.</p> <p>A spokesman for the Colorado State Patrol, which made the initial discovery of the fentanyl, provided a blunt account of the botched operation.</p> <p>“DEA was working with us and they made a deal with the driver,” Master Trooper Gary Cutler said. “He ran on them after they worked the case, and that was their debacle.”</p> <p>Maria “Maki” Haberfeld, a professor at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice and former DEA consultant, said the agents should have known they needed extra surveillance on a potential cooperator whom they didn’t have adequate time to vet.</p> <p>“This is a fiasco for the DEA,” Haberfeld said.</p> <p>DEA spokeswoman Katherine Pfaff declined to comment to NBC News, citing the ongoing investigation. But after this story was published, a DEA official confirmed the seizure of 114 pounds of fentanyl.</p> <p>"Those drugs have remained in law enforcement’s possession ever since," the official said. "DEA is relentlessly pursuing the individuals that were involved in the trafficking of the seized fentanyl and will continue to do so."</p> <p>U.S. overdose deaths topped 100,000 for the first time last year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, fueled in large part by fentanyl. Of the 107,622 fatal overdoses reported in 2021, 71,238, or 66%, involved fentanyl.</p>

The highly potent opioid is cheaper than other drugs and comes in the form of a white powder, which allows traffickers to mix it with cocaine and other drugs or stamp it into prescription pills like Xanax to stretch out their supply and increase profits. In many cases, cocaine and pills laced with fentanyl have killed people who had no idea they were consuming it. But some drug users [are now seeking out fentanyl](#) for its intense high.

In Colorado, fentanyl deaths increased more than tenfold in the past five years — from 81 in 2017 to more than 900 in 2021, according to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. Overdose deaths have also spiked in Indiana, where the fentanyl from the Colorado bust was apparently headed.

“How bad is it? It’s everywhere,” said Robin Vida, director of health, outreach, promotion and education for the St. Joseph County Department of Health, which covers South Bend.

The Maldonado case, which was first reported by [The Denver Gazette](#), began with a routine traffic stop. An application for an arrest warrant, filed in Colorado district court by a state trooper, provides a detailed narrative of the events leading to Maldonado’s disappearance.

At about 10:37 a.m. on June 18, the trooper spotted a car weaving in and out of traffic on Interstate 70 just west of Denver.

The trooper stopped the car and noticed the driver was “exceptionally nervous.”

The driver, identified as Maldonado, told the trooper he had spent a week in the town of Grand Junction visiting family. But the trooper knew the story was a lie; he had run a check on Maldonado’s license plate prior to the stop and learned that it had been scanned by a license plate reader in Southern California roughly 24 hours earlier.

The trooper scanned the inside of Maldonado’s car and noticed that it was empty except for a couple of energy drinks, some gas station snack foods and a blanket on the back seat.

“Maldonado’s nervousness did not subside throughout the entire contact,” even though the trooper told him he wasn’t getting a ticket, only a warning, the arrest warrant application says.

Maldonado claimed he wasn’t nervous; he just had to go to the bathroom “really bad.” He initially refused to allow the trooper to search his car but then relented because he wanted to get back on the road, the court document says.

The trooper let him drive 3 miles to the next exit to use the restroom. While Maldonado was in the bathroom, the trooper walked his drug-sniffing dog around the vehicle. The dog signaled the presence of drugs, the affidavit says, prompting the trooper to search inside the car.

The trooper found two traps used to conceal contraband in the floorboard, the affidavit says. When he pulled them out, he made a staggering discovery: 48 packages of fentanyl powder. In total, they weighed 114 pounds, the court document says.

After the trooper arrested him, Maldonado agreed to speak to a DEA agent. In addition to telling the agent that the drugs were headed to South Bend, Maldonado said he had picked up the fentanyl in California and had performed a drug run at least once before, the affidavit says.

Maldonado agreed to complete the delivery of the drugs so that the DEA could identify traffickers higher up in the criminal network.

The next day, Maldonado set out on the controlled delivery with a tracking device attached to his car. But at some point on his journey — it's not clear where — he managed to slip away from the surveillance and remove the tracker from his car, the affidavit says.

Maldonado is wanted on two felony charges — unlawful distribution of more than 225 grams of a controlled substance and introducing that substance into the state of Colorado.

The U.S. Marshals confirmed that its Colorado Violent Offender Task Force is hunting for Maldonado, who was described in the affidavit as being 6-foot-2 and weighing 245 pounds.

“Due to the sensitive nature of our investigation, we are unable to provide any additional information at this time to prevent compromising any aspect of our case,” the agency said in a statement.

Frank Figliuzzi, a former FBI assistant director and an NBC News national security contributor, said the DEA is most likely conducting an internal investigation.

“We’ve got a record amount of fentanyl involved here, in fact, enough fentanyl to kill everyone in the state of Colorado,” Figliuzzi said. “The individual who was delivering that amount of fentanyl is now in the wind. And it looks like there are no other bad guys in custody, as far as we know, so that is a large-scale failure.”

Maldonado has family in Mexico, but he grew up in the tiny town of West Liberty, Iowa (population: 3,800), according to the warrant application.

He was a member of the West Liberty High School varsity football team for at least one season, according to the [high school sports website Max Preps](#).

But Maldonado began running afoul of the law while he was still in his teens.

In August 2013, he was pulled over by police who allegedly found a marijuana pipe in his car as well as a handgun wrapped in a pillowcase, according to a report in [The Muscatine Journal](#) in Iowa. A search of his bedroom turned up more than 21 grams of marijuana in 23 bags, along with a scale, the paper reported.

The charges were later dismissed, according to the online court lookup.

Maldonado has two Facebook accounts but rarely posts.

His last one was in March, three months before the Colorado traffic stop. It consisted of a photo showing him standing atop a large rock holding what appears to be a machete.

On an older Facebook page, he posted a comment in July 2020, lamenting how only nine people had reacted to a new profile picture.

“And not one is from someone who is close to me,” Maldonado wrote in Spanish. “What good is it to be born here if my loved ones can’t be here? man, what a s---y path has been given to me!”

NBC News reached out to multiple family members, but they either didn’t respond or declined to comment.

“I know nothing of (Maldonado) and I wish to not be bothered about whatever he’s gotten into,” one family member said.

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HEADLINE	10/04 Indiana police: 4 murders 24hrs not random
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/indiana-police-four-fatal-shootings-gary-were-not-random-gang-related

GIST	<p>City officials in Gary, Indiana addressed safety concerns regarding four fatal shootings that happened earlier this week, announcing that the killings were not random acts of violence.</p> <p>Four people – including two minors – were shot and killed within an approximate 24-hour period on October 2 and October 3, prompting concern from citizens.</p> <p>On Sunday, the body of 50-year-old April King was discovered inside an abandoned house. A man with a head wound was found on the house's front porch, leading police to believe the incident was an attempted murder-suicide.</p> <p>Later that day, Arlandus Jackson, 37, was admitted to a local hospital with a gunshot wound. He was later pronounced dead.</p> <p>Gary teens Dayvion Jones, 16, and Bobby Wright, 14, were shot and found unresponsive by authorities on Monday morning. Their deaths were ruled as homicides by the coroner's office.</p> <p>Although the recent deaths have shaken the small Indiana city, city officials say none of the crimes were random, nor were they related to drugs or gangs.</p> <p>"We believe [the teens] were killed together at the same time. Officers have very good leads in this case," Gary Police Chief Brian Evans said at a press conference on Tuesday.</p> <p>Gary Mayor, Jerome Prince, also assured the public that officials prioritize public safety in Gary, which is roughly 30 miles south of Chicago.</p> <p>"I want to say this is not Gary. This is certainly not who we are," Prince told reporters.</p> <p>"We do everything in our efforts to make sure that it's a safe city, understanding that 'safe' is a matter of perspective," the Democratic mayor added.</p> <p>There have been 52 homicides in Gary so far in 2022 – a 44% increase from October 2021.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 Bloody Ecuador prison riot death toll: 16
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/drug-capo-16-dead-bloody-ecuador-prison-riot-91005327
GIST	<p>QUITO, Ecuador -- The death toll from a bloody fight among inmates at a prison in central Ecuador rose to 16 Tuesday, and authorities said one of the dead was an alleged drug gang boss who had evaded charges in Peru by faking his death during the pandemic.</p> <p>Officials said the number of wounded from clashes among inmates armed with guns and knives at the state prison in Latacunga stood at 43, with two in critical condition. The fighting erupted Monday and continued into the early hours of Tuesday.</p> <p>The drug capo was identified as Leonardo Norero, alias "El Patron." Authorities said that they could confirm his death but that rules allowed details of how he died to be given only to his family.</p> <p>Norero, 35, had been arrested in an exclusive area of Guayaquil in late May during a raid that officials said seized 42 gold bars, weapons, jewelry and about \$7 million in cash. They said he owned at least seven companies and luxury real estate, among other assets.</p> <p>He was being held at the medium-security prison in Latacunga, about 80 kilometers (50 miles) south of the capital, Quito, while awaiting trial on drug trafficking and money laundering charges.</p> <p>Norero also was wanted on drug trafficking charges in Peru, where authorities say he managed to evade justice in mid-2020 by faking his own death amid the coronavirus pandemic and escaping to Ecuador. His lawyers had presented a falsified death certificate and purported photos of his death.</p>

	<p>Dozens of soldiers arrived at the Ecuadorean prison at midday Tuesday to reinforce security while administrative personnel were evacuated from inside the complex.</p> <p>In recent years, Ecuador's state prisons have seen numerous bloody clashes between rival groups of prisoners, which authorities have blamed on disputes among rival drug gang members.</p> <p>Prison official said 316 inmates were killed by other prisoners last year, while so far this year there have been 106 fatalities.</p> <p>The worst battle occurred in September 2021 at the Litoral Penitentiary in Guayaquil, when 125 prisoners were killed. Two months later, a fight at the same prison caused 65 deaths.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/04 Gunmen kill Philippine radio commentator
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/motorcycle-riding-gunmen-kill-philippine-radio-commentator-90969338
GIST	<p>MANILA, Philippines -- Motorcycle-riding gunmen killed a longtime radio commentator in metropolitan Manila in the latest attack on a member of the media in the Philippines, considered one of the world's most dangerous countries for journalists.</p> <p>Police said Percival Mabasa, 63, was driving his vehicle Monday night when two men on a motorcycle approached and shot him twice in the head in suburban Las Pinas City.</p> <p>The attackers escaped and an investigation is underway to identify and locate them, police officials said. They said investigators are trying to determine the motive for the attack.</p> <p>Mabasa, who used the broadcast name Percy Lapid, was critical of former President Rodrigo Duterte, who oversaw a deadly crackdown on illegal drugs, and his successor, Ferdinand Marcos Jr., the son of a dictator who was ousted in a 1986 pro-democracy uprising.</p> <p>Media watchdogs condemned Mabasa's killing, saying the attack underscores how deadly the Philippines remains for journalists.</p> <p>"That the incident took place in Metro Manila indicates how brazen the perpetrators were and how authorities have failed to protect journalists as well as ordinary citizens from harm," the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines said in a statement.</p> <p>Amnesty International said the attack "bears all the hallmarks of an extrajudicial execution and an attempt to silence voices critical of the government."</p> <p>The victim's family condemned the "brutal and brazen killing" and demanded that the perpetrators to be brought to justice.</p> <p>Mabasa is the second journalist killed under Marcos Jr., who took office in June. Radio broadcaster Rey Blanco was stabbed to death during an altercation last month in central Negros Oriental province. The suspect immediately surrendered to police.</p> <p>Nearly 200 journalists have been killed in the Philippines since 1986, when Marcos Sr. was overthrown, according to the journalists' union. The group led a protest Tuesday night and called on the government to do more to stop the killing of journalists.</p> <p>In 2009, members of a powerful political clan and their men killed 58 people, including 32 media workers, in an execution-style attack in southern Maguindanao province that horrified the world.</p>

	The mass killing, linked to a political rivalry, demonstrated the dangers journalists face in the Philippines, which has many unlicensed guns, private armies controlled by powerful clans and weak law enforcement, especially in rural regions.
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HEADLINE	10/04 Search for 4 kidnapped family members
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/month-family-members-kidnapped-california/story?id=90970929
GIST	<p>A person of interest is in custody in connection with the kidnapping of four family members, including an 8-month-old girl, who remain missing, authorities said.</p> <p>Eight-month-old Aroohi Dheri and her parents -- 27-year-old mother Jasleen Kaur and 36-year-old father Jasdeep Singh -- were taken against their will from a business in Merced County in Northern California on Monday, Merced County Sheriff Vern Warnke said. The baby's uncle, 39-year-old uncle Amandeep Singh, was also kidnapped, the sheriff said.</p> <p>A person of interest in the case is currently in custody, authorities said Tuesday. The man -- identified as 48-year-old Jesus Manuel Salgado -- attempted to take his own life "prior to law enforcement involvement" and is currently in critical condition receiving medical attention, the Merced County Sheriff's Office said.</p> <p>The update comes after detectives received information Tuesday morning that one of the victim's ATM cards was used at a bank in the city of Atwater, in Merced County, the sheriff's office said.</p> <p>The sheriff's office initially said a subject captured in surveillance footage making a transaction at the bank matched the appearance of a suspect seen in surveillance footage at the kidnapping scene. The sheriff's office later said a photo of the person at the ATM was not the person of interest who is in custody, and that it's working with the bank to obtain the correct photo.</p> <p>The four family members have not been found.</p> <p>"Investigators continue to follow up on all leads and are working diligently to find the family," the sheriff's office said. "We continue to ask for the public's help with any information that may assist us in locating the family's whereabouts."</p> <p>No motive is known, the sheriff said.</p> <p>"It's imperative that we get some information on this. So far, as I know, no contact has been made, no ransom demands, nothing from the suspects," the sheriff said.</p> <p>The sheriff's office announced on Tuesday that Amandeep Singh's truck had been found on fire shortly before noon on Monday.</p> <p>Police went to Amandeep Singh's home around 12:35 p.m. Monday; while they couldn't locate him, they did speak to another relative, the sheriff's office said. When the relative couldn't reach Jasleen Kaur, Jasdeep Singh or Amandeep Singh, the relative reported them missing, the sheriff's office said.</p> <p>Sheriff's officials then responded to a business, and "during the primary investigation, detectives determined that the individuals were kidnapped," the sheriff's office said Tuesday.</p> <p>"We've got detectives out canvassing, we've had aircraft out looking for evidence. People are gonna be working 24 hours on this until we get a break in this," he said. "We've got to bring this family home safely."</p> <p>Merced County is located between San Francisco and Fresno.</p>

	The FBI, California Department of Justice and local law enforcement agencies are involved in the search, the sheriff's office said.
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